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CHRISTIAN ASPECTS

OF

FAITH AND DUTY.

CHRISTIAN ASPECTS

OF

FAITH AND DUTY.

DISCOURSES

BY

JOHN JAMES TAYLER, B.A.

(Unitarian.)

Τὰ δόγματα σὺ ἕτοιμα ἔχε πρὸς τὸ τὰ θεῖα καὶ ἀνθρώπινα εἰδέναι καὶ πᾶν καὶ τὸ μικρότατον οὕτω ποιεῖν, ὡς τῆς ἀμφοτέρων πρὸς ἄλληλα συνδέσεως μεμνημένον. Οὔτε γὰρ ἀνθρωπινον τι ἄνευ τῆς ἐπὶ τὰ θεῖα συναναφορᾶς εὖ πράξεις, οὔτε ἔμπαλιν.—*Marcus Antoninus*, III. 13.

'You will not understand the Human without a reference to the Divine, nor the Divine without a reference to the Human.'

FROM THE LONDON EDITION,

WITH AN INTRODUCTION.

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INTRODUCTION.

This volume will sufficiently commend itself to those who read it. But the publisher has thought that a brief introduction of it to the American public would aid its circulation. Having fallen in with an English copy of the work during my summer vacation, from which I received great instruction and delight, it was with peculiar satisfaction that I found it in process of republication on my return to New-York. We have seen nothing from Mr. Tayler's pen before, justifying the enthusiasm with which his English brethren are accustomed to speak of him. But we understand from this volume, how full his claims are to the respect and admiration of the denomination he adorns.

It is not so much as sermons, but rather as essays upon the most immediately and permanently interesting topics of Christian thought, that we value these discourses. While treating the general subject of practical religion, they grapple with the very questions that are now agitating the mind of the religious world. There is a frankness and courage in meet-

ing doubts and difficulties, a union of boldness of thought with reverence of spirit, a sympathy with the explorers and pioneers of modern thought, blended with gratitude and docility toward past thinkers, a manly, business-like dealing with religion,—which, together, make this volume singularly pertinent to the wants of the times, and admirably adapted to hold the beam, while freedom and authority, dogmatism and doubt, are agitating the scales of theological opinion. But it would be an injustice to the author, did we omit to say, that his Discourses, though peculiarly timely, are not dependent for their interest on the period of their appearance. They deal with permanent realities in a manner and spirit, which is for all times. They are rather positive enunciations of Christian truths, than controversial arguments upon disputed points.

We cannot forbear to ask attention to the careful finish of the author's style. It is calm, clear and strong, rising at times into the most graceful eloquence.

Among the many and increasing obligations under which our English brethren are placing us, we gratefully acknowledge the weight of this new gift.

H. W. Bellows.

New-York, Sept. 25, 1851.

PREFACE.

This Volume is published in compliance with earnest and repeated request; and that is the proper apology for its appearance. Never indeed can the themes of which it treats, lose their interest with the thoughtful and the serious: but there are few minds that can hope by any originality of conception or freshness of illustration, to set in a new light and invest with a new attractiveness, those aspects of our relation to the great realities of the Universe visible and invisible, which under some form or other are ever present to the human consciousness, and age after age have had the richest lights reflected on them from the most gifted spirits. No such presumptuous hope would ever have delivered these pages to the world.—But we may exact too much from ourselves; over-estimate our claims as well as under-estimate our powers; and omit to do good, from miscalculating our capacity of usefulness. By aiming at too high an intel-

lectual standard, we may let slip the more obvious and certain opportunities of moral influence, which ever wait on sincerity and earnestness, the honest pursuit of truth and the ardent desire of human happiness. It is a comfort to feel, that this Volume is put forth under circumstances which give it the promise of some beneficial impression on the minds to which it is immediately addressed. It is committed to them in the full trust, that the remembrance of the friend will in some measure supply the defects of the writer; that the mutual confidence and understanding of a long and happy intercourse will infuse a deeper significance into words that might else fail to interest or convince; and that many a passage, associated with the memory of the living sympathies that once took it to the conscience and the heart, will gather a light from affections which have been purified and brightened by the common sorrows and joys of many years, and are destined, it is hoped, to endure unchanged through the evening of life.—To those who share with the writer these grateful recollections and happy feelings—this Volume is dedicated.—If it shall help to preserve in their hearts, while they tarry here, the living spirit of the Religion of Christ;—to cherish their enthusiasm for what is pure and noble and generous;—to urge

them to a high and self-denying virtue; to give them the strength of faith under affliction and trial; —and to fill them with a calm and holy trust in the expectation of the last great change:—it will have performed its task, and may pass contentedly to its rest with the generation which it has served in its day to comfort and instruct. The small drops that from endless sources instil a strengthening sweetness into the draught of life, cannot be counted and are soon forgotten; but their united influence leaves the world better and happier than it would else have been.

Should this Volume attract the notice of any minds unprepossessed by such friendly associations —their candid judgment is bespoken in behalf of some views that may be found not wholly in accordance with the received opinions of the Christian world; and should the quarter whence it comes raise a prejudice which repels examination, let them consider the words of the humble and pious à Kempis—'Non quæras quis hoc dixerit, sed quid dicatur attende.'

March 25, 1851.

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DISCOURSES.

I.

SPIRITUAL HUNGER AND THIRST.

AMOS, viii. 11, 12.

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord:

"And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east; they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it."

IN the childhood of the human race, Religion is a spontaneous sentiment and intuitive perception in which, as in a surrounding atmosphere, the mind unconsciously draws its breath and has its being. In the broad sunlight and the drifting cloud—in the roar of cataracts and the roll of thunder—in the fitful whisperings of the forest-trees and in the monotonous dash of the surge on the ocean-beach—the tenant of the primeval wilderness recognised a presence and a power which thrilled and awed his soul, and overwhelmed him with emotions that are the germ of adoration and worship. Such is the origin

of a natural piety. It is the mind's instinctive acknowledgment of a kindred spirit in the outward universe. It is not the product of reasoning, for it is found strong and active, where the faculty of reasoning is hardly developed: but it lies deeply imbedded in those primitive tendencies of our nature, which all reasoning tacitly assumes and acts upon. Here is the hidden fount of Faith, which must gush up within the man, and cannot flow into him from without. It is the interior sentiment which all religious teachers must appeal to and awaken, or their instructions will remain simple formulas—a mere rind of words without any core of vitality. It is the material, out of which the domestic affections, the moral sense, and the usages of society, blending with the influences of external nature and stimulated by the inspirations of holy men and prophets—have elaborated the various religious systems that have ever existed in intimate union with civilisation—strengthening it with an energy of good, so long as any genuine faith subsisted at the heart of them—but withering, as soon as faith was gone, into hollow observances and senseless dogmas, the retreats of hypocrisy and corruption, prolific only of delusions that poison and cramp the soul. It has been the problem of ages—not yet completely solved—how to uphold this primitive faith—this faith in spiritual realities and omnipresent mind—in free and living harmony with the irresistible conclusions of science and the encroaching influences of material wealth.

All our instinctive tendencies become in time the subject of reflection and analysis—the religious

among the rest. This power of self-observation is the privilege of man; but it has its inconveniences as well as its advantages. Reason is an instrument confided to our discretionary use. It is long before we learn to handle it wisely, or perceive the limits within which it can be profitably employed. If we ask for proofs which the nature of the subject does not admit, we plunge into helpless scepticism. If we insist on rendering logically clear, that which from its very infinity eludes the grasp of a finite intellect, we only thicken the natural darkness which envelopes us. If we attempt to determine that, which from the conditions of the case is indeterminable—we sow the seeds of endless subtleties which choke the mind instead of fructifying it. If we aim at producing unity of opinion, where variety of conception is inevitable—we necessitate the existence of sects, whose interminable warfare diversifies the forms of error without multiplying in an equal degree the chances of truth. These mistakes have been committed age after age by the religious mind. We have overlooked the primitiveness and superiority to all logical proof, of that fundamental feeling, out of which faith in a ruling mind and a divine government, is naturally evolved in the development of the human faculties; while the secondary doctrines constructed on this hidden basis by the activity of the speculative intellect, have been assailed and defended on grounds equally unsatisfactory, because not reduced to those primary data whence faith has its origin and where only conviction finds its ultimate repose. From this misdirection of inquiry, religious

controversy becomes, as it proceeds, predominantly intellectual, and retreats at every step further and further from the inner source of Faith, out of which all vital results must issue. The devout fervour which was so strong in the early stages of the religious life—waxes faint and chill. The streams of inspiration which once bathed the soul in a flood of holy joy—run low, and leave it arid and barren. Dry and intellectual natures, unable to behold any vital principle at work, begin to look on all theological questions as thorny disputes about words, and yielding to the reactionary impulse of their time, turn away with absolute indifference from Religion itself.

Collaterally with this inner decline of the religious life, it will often happen, that either the sciences of pure intellect, or such as investigate the properties of matter, with the arts that are founded on them—receive extraordinary stimulus, and make rapid progress; and in both directions draw away the strength of thought from those spiritual elements of humanity, in the profound consciousness and earnest culture of which Religion finds its nourishment and vigour. The accumulation of riches—the taste for luxury—the sense of elegance—the spirit of commercial enterprise—so constantly associated with great scientific developments, and productive, like them, of many virtues—have also the effect of weakening for a time the spiritual tendencies and aspirations of the soul. The high tone of ancient reverence is lowered. Self becomes too predominant in human aims. The ambition of personal distinction

and social elevation takes the place of faith and a simple purpose of duty, as the guiding impulse of multitudes. Devout surrender of the heart to God is overpowered by the lust of human sympathy. Clouds of gold, rich, palpable and gorgeous, curtain round this little life of earth, and shut out the view of that distant shore, deep-bosomed in eternity—to which the immortal spirit, when these pageantries are all dissolved, must take its silent and mysterious way.

Meanwhile, that great truth of Scripture retains all its force—'Man cannot live by bread alone.' Neither the solicitudes of wealth nor the fascinations of voluptuousness can always banish the thought of that dread Infinitude, in which as in a fathomless ocean our atom of conscious being finds itself plunged. It is a sure sign of the indestructible root of Religion in our nature, that man is unable for any considerable period to subsist without it. He may profess infidelity, but a secret faith is gnawing at his heart. He may give himself up to the world, and laugh at all religious systems; but ever and anon passing moods of inexplicable sadness will warn him, that he wants the solace of an inward peace. Through the veil which he has drawn over his mind, strange gleams of light will at times break in, and startle his fatal repose. He will be conscious of a vacuity which outward things do not fill. In the absence of faith, he will be the prey of a mysterious disquietude and unaccountable apprehensions. If he be of a reflective turn—in the vast silence of a speechless Universe he will feel himself lonely and

desolate—terrified at the solitudes which stretch around him on every side into boundless space. Yea, there are moments when he will become a worshipper in spite of himself. Alone among the hills, with their solemn stillness floating round him—or as he marks from the mountain-side the calm glory of the sun sinking down into a flood of ocean-light—he will recognise the invisible Presence that consecrates the universe, and the yearning for sympathy will burst in unbidden accents from his lips. 'Thou wondrous Unknown'—he will exclaim—'tell me, what Thou art. Answer the earnest questionings of my spirit. Remove the film that hath hidden Thee from the eyes of my soul. Let me embrace Thee as a kindred Spirit—not unconscious of thy creature's aspirations, nor spurning the trustful heart that seeks its peace in Thee.'

Periods of indifference and scepticism are followed at length, through that conservative re-action which controls human affairs, by a revival of religious interest and fervour. But the change does not take place at once, nor can it be artificially accelerated. The earlier ties which bound men to faith and duty, have been dissolved. They are out of harmony with themselves and with the world. They experience a want which they know not how to supply. They begin to regret the faith which cheered and guided their simpler forefathers; and many would fain throw themselves back into it, if they could. This, however, cannot be. The solutions of one age do not meet the difficulties which perplex another. Life has lapsed once more into a moral

and spiritual chaos—and needs some higher influence to unravel its intricacies, and draw out its latent tendencies, and direct its vague aspirations. Men are suffering from a spiritual famine, and catch eagerly at every semblance of spiritual food. They languish for the word of God; they run to and fro to seek it, and cannot find it. This is a state of things which occurs at intervals in all civilised communities. The language of the prophet in the text refers immediately to the effects of protracted wickedness and infidelity in the latter days of the Israelitish kingdom—now turning again in quest of a faith which could not be found, because men's iniquities had blocked up the access to it. But it is a representation applicable to the corresponding period of every human history. It describes a want which at this day is felt throughout society—the craving after spiritual rest and contentment—going up and down the earth in search of it, without knowing where to look for it, or how it is to be obtained. 'Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east; they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it.'

The present age, though deficient in clear, definite and stable faith, can hardly be called an irreligious age. It is wholly unlike the latter half of the last century. It has no contempt for religion as such. It makes no war on its existing forms. It

tolerates all which give evidence of an indwelling spirit of earnestness and sincerity. It will not accept the impressions of sense as the only possible realities. Its tendencies are rather towards mysticism than materialism. It is in quest of something which it cannot find. There is an affection, as yet uncertain of its object. There is an appetite, but without food which it can relish or digest. It is a spirit of hungering and thirsting for the Word of God. From every side comes forth the cry—'Who will show us any good?' In its willingness to admit every plausible show of truth—in its eclectic and conciliatory tendency (for this *is* its tendency, despite the counteracting efforts of hierarchies)—our age has some resemblance to the commencement of the Christian era, when the dissolution of old faiths had broken down the former barriers of opinion, and opened a free passage to many a disordered soul, for the restorative influences of the Gospel.

Various are the expedients of unsettled minds, to still this inward craving for peace.—To and fro they go in all directions, like the troubled spirit of the wilderness, seeking rest and finding none.—Some imaginative natures fondly retreat into the past. There they recognise a world of faith, and think they can make it their own.—Reverently they shake off the dust from old dogmas and old usages; and dragging them out of their dark retreats, set them up amidst the brilliant novelties which the sharp light of modern science shines upon, and expect by the mere contrast of their antique and mouldering aspect, to inspire again the worship and the trust of which they were

once the object. And doubtless under these old forms there was hidden in their day a spirit of divine beauty and immortal life.—But of what avail is the corpse, when the breath has gone out of it? 'Why seek we the living among the dead?' It is the risen Jesus that we long to behold—not the cold, sepulchral stone that received his bier, nor the cerecloths that wrapped his mortal clay.—No authority is lodged with the past, but what comes from principles that abide with us equally in the present, and in ever-changing forms will attend the human race through all the phases of its destined development. Forms wither and pass away; but principles endure.—We have done little in evoking the vanished form from the grave, if the conviction that once dwelt in it and gave it vitality, cannot be breathed into it anew.

Others take up some fashionable philosophy, and try to compound a religion out of its doctrines. But no purely intellectual process can generate a faith.—We cannot lay down a plan of observation to detect a religion, and coolly await the result. Religion is no dim star hidden in the depths of speculation, of which when we suspect the quarter, we can calculate the attractions and predict the place.—It is a light, native to the soul, and must arise on us within, if it arise at all.—If such faith as we have, be genuine—and if the philosophy that we follow, have in reference to man's nature, any truth at all—so far as religion and philosophy can properly intermix, they will unite of themselves without any compulsion from us. All our faculties and affections work

in perfect harmony, when they healthfully develope themselves, and one is not allowed to tyrannize over the rest.

Some again throw themselves into the fervours of fanatical excitement; dissolve reason in dreams and ecstacies; and exhibit to the contemptuous pity of sounder minds, the revolting phenomena of fakirs and schamans.—Some scrupulously tie down their belief to a literal acceptance of the written word; translate the history and literature of ancient Palestine into a modern fact; and waste their spiritual strength in fruitless efforts to accomplish the impossible and reconcile contradictions.—Others of a freer spirit have recourse to eclecticism; and picking out of all religious systems, whatever they like best and think most true, make up a patchwork of faith, harmonized by no strong pervading hue of individual conviction—at peace with all, but sympathizing profoundly with none.—Others flutter about in a thin atmosphere of hazy sentimentality, through which they see nothing clearly, though not without some perception of the cheering warmth of the Source of Day.

Such endeavours to lay hold of Religion are often made with sincerity; but they do not satisfy the conditions of the case, and cannot issue in a perfect peace.—Neither antiquity, nor philosophy, nor fanaticism, nor mere scripturalism, nor eclecticism, nor mystic sentimentality—are Religion: they may afford an access to it, but they are not Religion itself. What course, then, must we take, to gain and secure this precious good?—We must abandon all artificial

expedients to *force* a faith.—We must submit ourselves to the order, indicated by Providence and displayed in the manifold experiences recorded by Scripture.—Every one must, in the first instance, go back to his own soul. There he may have direct communion with God. There is the source and centre of all spiritual vitality. There only he can break up the living fountain of Religion. Three simple rules furnish our best guidance.

First, be true to yourself. Look through your nature with the single eye of conscience. Disguise no evil that you find lurking there.—Own it for what it is, and resolve to expel it. In aspiration and endeavour aim at the highest good which you can conceive; however alien to many tendencies yet unsubdued and strong, your unperverted judgment will tell you, that it is the proper end and true glory of your being. Purified by this moral effort, call out into action those first principles of faith which you will find at the bottom of your soul—buried it may be under the rubbish of human systems—vast heaps of theological conventionalism or the grosser accumulations of philosophical sophistries. Be not anxious, impatient, over-inquisitive—but thoughtful, serious, calm.—Be still, and wait for God. Expect Him, and at his own time He will come to you. All is not error in the quietism inculcated by some religious writers. Bustle, excitement, scrupulous questionings about words and phrases, disperse the gathering elements of a religious life, and repel the silent affluxes of the Spirit of God. Feel yourself in the mysterious embrace of a Father's love.—In your

solitary wanderings—in the secret communings of your heart—when you meditate on your bed in the night-watches—cherish the thought which will often arise within you then, that man could not be happy in the consciousness of perfect isolation—that he was not designed for one moment to live alone—that he dwells in the presence of a Spirit with which his own spirit has affinities, and may at all times and in all places have intercourse.—In the light of beauty that floats over the changing aspects of the material universe—in the grand interpreting thought which pervades the broken story of the ages, and translates it into coherency—in the spirit which comes to you from the smiles of gladness and the tears of sorrow, and softens your heart in genial sympathy with human weal and human woe—in the interchange of ideas which kindles enthusiasm, and draws a higher meaning and purpose out of life—acknowledge realities which transcend the limits of sense—own a spiritual world, whose mysteries encompass you on every side, by whose laws you are bound, and in whose issues of endless unfolding you are yourself perhaps destined to be involved. Admit these feelings—which at times with more or less power visit all men; let them have free and unquestioned passage through your soul; and at length settle quietly on its silent depths:—and you will have begun the religious life; you will have prepared and spread the soil; and the seed which you cast into it, will henceforth grow.

Secondly, cultivate the domestic and social affections. These will give richness and strength to the

finer elements of religious veneration, and take a higher purity from it in return. Selfishness is the poison of a true devotion: love is its only fitting nutriment. From the bosom of our homes ascends that ineffable sentiment which finds its loftiest object in God, and its final rest in Heaven. Not in the cells of anchorites or the joyless celibacy of the priest—but in the cheerful stir of the family life—in the generous charities which bind neighbours and fellow-citizens in one wide community of interest and endeavour—must we seek the discipline of that healthful piety which is the blessing and the consecration of our earthly lot. Bound to others by endless ties of affection and sympathy, our being is made one with theirs: and their joys and sorrows—their successes and misfortunes—their sicknesses and trials—their births, their marriages, their deaths—pervade life with thrilling and ceaseless interest, and far more than any thing which touches ourselves alone, keep up strong and active within us the essential feelings of Religion. The heart, which glows with human charities, cannot in its depths be indevout.

Thirdly, give yourself earnestly to duty. Scepticism often has its source in the torpor of the active powers. The dreamer comes at length almost to doubt his own existence. Resolve to work out faithfully what you perceive to be the Sovereign will, and a more lively sense of God's presence will spring up within you. You will taste His blessing, and feel His strength; and your supplications for guidance, sustained by renewed endeavours to do right, will bring an answer of quiet trust and steadfast

faith to your heart. There is a fierce conflict of good and evil throughout the universe; but good is in the ascendant, and must triumph at last. It is the vital principle of things, in which we believe God to be more immediately present and operative. Ally yourself with this principle. Put yourself into harmony with the grand order of Divine Providence. Grapple with evil in all its forms. Make war with all your energies, on falsehood, ignorance, oppression and vice. Uphold against them the cause of truth, and freedom, and justice, and humanity. Throw yourself heartily into this great and noble warfare—never doubting to what issue it must come:—and every cloud of distrust and fear that may have darkened for a moment over your mind, will pass away; you will now see all things plain in the light of God; you will be strong in that faith which gives man a giant's power for the achievement of the highest good.

Thus attuned by inward and outward discipline to the true feeling of Religion—the influences of holy men and prophets will now tell with marked effect on the spiritual condition of your soul. Your own experience will give a meaning to their words, which before you could not comprehend. The mystic chain is now laid, along which the life of God may pass from some gifted spirit, richly charged with its power and its truth, into your spirit which still feels its deficiencies and craves to have them supplied. The religious life which you have called forth by your own efforts, constitutes the *inward* revelation of the Divine Word; and this is a condi-

tion of *outward* revelation, though it may not supersede it. Every wise man's instruction and every good man's example feeds it with a holy oil, and causes it to send up a brighter flame.

But the completest embodiment of a Divine Word in its external manifestation,—is that Holy Record, unfolding the progressive development of a monotheistic faith—which exhibits at its point of culmination, the unparalleled reality of a sinless Manhood in perfect harmony with God. Here is a stimulus, to rouse the lowest depths, and take in the whole compass, of the religious principle in man. Here is an Ideal, to shape its course and attract its aspirations. From this realisation of a perfect Humanity goes forth to every believing soul, the transforming influence through which it is fashioned into the likeness of Christ and God, and becomes a partaker of that divine nature whose home is in Heaven. Thus the inward and the outward Word coalesce, and furnish mutual evidence of a common origin from God. The spirit of Christ shining through the outward Word, pours his own strength and fulness into the inward Word, and brings it out in clearer and brighter characters on the tablets of the individual heart: while the inward Word, thus quickened into a distincter consciousness, and with firmer reliance on its intuitive perceptions, becomes a sure guide for the mind through the tangled maze of Scripture lore,—enabling it at once to single out and appropriate amidst the perplexing redundancy of national legend and ancient song, of popular instruction and prophetic enthusiasm—those great

principles which contain the eternal truth of God—that bread of life and those waters of salvation, which can alone appease the hunger and thirst of man's immortal soul.

II.

MAN'S ASCENT TO GOD.

JAMES, iv. 8.

"Draw nigh unto God, and He will draw nigh unto you."

Physically—we cannot separate ourselves from God; for in the language of the psalmist, He 'has beset us behind and before, and laid his hand upon us;' and in the still more decided words of Paul, 'in Him we live and move and have our being.' *Morally*—we feel ourselves at an infinite distance from Him: an impassable gulf seems to lie between Him and us. Scripture in various forms gives utterance to this solemn consciousness of every religious mind,—'God dwells in light which no man can approach unto.' (1 Tim. iv. 16.) The greatest prophet cannot 'see Him, and live.' (Exod. xxxiii. 20.) Even Abraham, the father of the faithful—distinguished [illegible] of God—thought it a presumption, [illegible] the days of patriarchal communion, that he, who was but dust and ashes, should have taken upon him to speak unto the Lord.' (Gen. xviii. 27.)

[illegible] we rest in the first of these views, and confine our thoughts to the fixed and uniform order of phenomena which act on the senses—we not only see not God *in* all things—which is a Scriptural idea—but

we are borne unconsciously to a conclusion which goes beyond it; we identify all things *with* God, and look upon ourselves as a part of Him. If we add to this view, the profounder consciousness of our spiritual activity and personal responsibility, which is its needful complement—and which has a yet stronger expression in Scripture—the latter inference is checked, for we then recognise all things—ourselves included—as dependent on God, yet distinct from Him—subsisting indeed through his ever-present energy, but under such conditions of limitation, as must separate by an insurmountable barrier every thing created from the absolute perfection of his own Infinitude. In tracing to its legitimate consequences the idea of fundamental power from these opposite data, we reach the point of vital separation between the pantheistic and the monotheistic conception of the universe. A different interpretation of the same phenomena, will cause a momentous difference in the conclusion. According as we take consciousness, intelligence, will—in one word—Spirit—to be only the last result of the progressive development of things, or to be itself, in its absolute state, the source and regulating principle of the entire system—the most recent effect in the order of creation, or the fundamental agency which underlies all creation's energies and manifestations—we lapse into virtual atheism, or we come to a clear acknowledgment of the Living God.

A vital question, then, is involved in the right apprehension of what is called the personality

God. This doctrine, truly conceived, stands in the central point, from which opinion has constantly diverged, on one hand, into *anthropomorphism* which degrades the Almighty into a mere exaggeration of human passions and infirmities—and, on the other, into *pantheism* which evaporates Deity into an abstraction, or reduces it to an unintelligent and incomprehensible force. Each of these extreme tendencies is at war with a healthy reason, and destructive of genuine religion: but we must not on that account include in indiscriminating censure, all the individuals who may from various causes have been more or less carried away by them. All errors that have had extensive currency among earnest and thoughtful men, are allied to some truth, and were originally designed to correct some excess or meet some want of the spiritual nature.* In the action and re-action which mark the progress of ideas, doctrines mischievous in their remoter consequences, may help to qualify too strong a tendency in the opposite direction, and so adjust the final balance of opinion. Meanwhile, the calm and dispassionate mind, observing how these divergencies successively compensate each other, is confirmed in its attachment to the great central truths whose fixed influence and controlling attraction are equally indicated by them all. In pronouncing judgment,

* 'Der Irrthum nirgend an und für sich ist, sondern immer nur an dem wahren, und er nicht eher vollkomm en verstanden worden ist, bis Man seinen Zusammenhang mit der Wahrheit, und das wahre woran er haftet, gefunden hat.'—*Schleiermacher, Christliche Claube.* I. § 7. 3.

therefore, on an individual, it is not fair to allege even the undeniable consequences of his opinions, if we have reason to think, that he did not anticipate them. We must ask what his Past had been—and what his Present was: in them we can often find the determining impulse of a man's peculiar opinions. Perhaps he was so absorbed by the desire of counteracting evils and errors, which he daily felt and saw in strong operation around him,—that he hardly carried forward his thoughts into the Future at all. The impassioned anthropomorphism which mingled such exciting elements with the religious agency of Zinzendorf and Wesley—is entitled at least to a lenient construction, when we remember the cold and powerless rationalism which it strove to overcome. Nor again is it surprising, that men so profoundly meditative as Spinoza—so ardent in speculation as Lessing—so refined, subtile and comprehensive as Schleiermacher—disgusted with the gross and heavy orthodoxy of their day, and earnestly aspiring after a higher spirituality—should have rarefied their conception of God, till substance and vitality—all that we can realise to ourselves as a Living Personality—vanished away. It is impossible to doubt the pious feeling and serious purpose of all these men. Such considerations, however, should not blind us to the pernicious tendency of errors which their genius and virtues have invested with a kind of moral respectability. Only let us spare the persons, while we attack the thing.

We put ourselves in the right position for apprehending the idea of the Divine Personality, when we

set out from the first and nearest of all realities—our own spiritual consciousness—and think of God, as a kindred nature—a Conscious Mind. All that we mean by the Personality of God, is included in an adequate conception of Mind. From Mind we acquire the notions of will, power, origination. But mere power left to itself would be a lawless and destructive force. From an inherent necessity, therefore, in mental action, we are compelled to assume the co-existence with Power, of other attributes to impel and guide it. These we express by the terms —Goodness and Wisdom—which embrace together all the moral and all the intellectual perfections of the Sovereign Spirit. As we are conscious, that our own errors and vices proceed from passions, infirmities and fears which are incidental to our limited nature, but from which He whose nature is without limit, must be free—we hesitate not to speak of God as absolutely without imperfection, and we ascribe to Him boundless Power, unerring Wisdom, infinite Love. These three great attributes of Power, Wisdom, Goodness, present themselves to us as necessary conditions of the existence and operations of the highest Mind—the absolute Being. Assume one of these attributes, and it will involve the co-existence of the other two. Admit flaw or deficiency in any one, and it will disturb its relations with the rest, and draw after it a dissolution of that harmony and self-consistency of action which is the basis of our reliance on the order and perpetuity of the universe.

Among the powers appertaining to the unsearchable essence of God, we must include that of limiting

the outgoings of his own creative energy—of arranging and distributing creation in endless gradations of life and faculty—of imparting to the race which he has placed at the head of the visible scale, some portion of his own spiritual consciousness and freedom—and of allowing them within certain bounds, through the mysterious endowment of will, to act in independence of Himself. Within these bounds lies the choice of Right and Wrong—with its effects on the moral condition of the agent—and the liberty implied in that choice, of voluntarily approximating to God or withdrawing from Him. It is in this highest sphere of our existence, where we are conscious of moral distinctions and a spontaneous reverence for what is just and true—that our minds attain the deepest conviction of the Personality of God—that we own Him, as a real Being—a living Presence—a sympathising Father and Friend. Our spirits—in this their holiest and most elevated mood—crave intercourse with a kindred Spirit—and believe, it is granted them. They repel it as an impossibility which their inmost nature disavows—that at this most advanced point of their ever-unfolding being, on the dim confines of visible and perishing things, they should at length find themselves lonely and forsaken—placed foremost among creatures, only to feel a more hopeless desolation—with no voice from the infinite Silence, to answer their imploring cries—no breath of responsive Love, to hush the throbbings of the expectant heart and soothe its intense yearnings after sympathy—no witness of a Parent Mind, to which a child's affections may cling, and to which a child's

weakness and ignorance may trust itself, in the dread uncertainty which overhangs the Future and the Unseen.

The apostolic exhortation, 'Draw nigh unto God,' implies, that in our natural state and at the commencement of our moral career, we are at a distance from God—and that to approach Him depends on our own volition and effort. This distance indeed varies in different individuals. The innocent simplicity of childhood would seem to lie in immediate contiguity with the Spirit of God. Yet there are often inherent tendencies to evil, which show themselves from the first in the human being. Often too the original purity is soiled and darkened by appetite and selfishness which interpose a shade before the countenance of God, and render a restorative process necessary to bring back the clear consciousness of his benignant presence. In every case communion with God is not a simple gift of nature, but the reward and blessing of spiritual culture and devotedness. Our moral remoteness from God, and the necessity of holiness to approach Him—is the great idea which pervades Scripture from beginning to end, and so broadly distinguishes it from the prevalent systems of philosophy. Thus placed by nature, while we are under the dominion of sense, and merely follow our instinctive impulses, at a great distance from the Most High—how are we to obey the apostles's injunction, and begin the free movement of our minds towards God? To trace this movement, is to trace the origin and progress of the religious life—that secret but fruitful intercourse which the

experience of thousands attests may subsist between the Spirit of God and the soul of Man. In the present discourse I shall speak of that part only of the process which relates to Man—of his personal, voluntary efforts to attain to God, and hold converse with Him.

(1.) The first step towards God originates in a deepened sense of the moral worth and high responsibilities of Man's life. The religion of children, as of some uncultivated and simple tribes, consists in a vague wonder and awe, intermingled with a diffusive feeling of gratitude and trust. They are taught perhaps to blend the idea of God with that of duty; but the association is not in general very vivid, till sorrow or death, or the consequences of heedless transgression, have awakened the mind to profounder reflection on the destination of humanity. While life flows on—in the main innocent and happy—the moral consciousness is tranquil, but it is not quick and operative. Such, however, can rarely be for any length of time, the condition of a dweller on earth. Sorrows and trials are too thickly spread—misfortune and disappointment reach us through too many avenues—to leave any one many years undisturbed by the importunate question—'Why am I here? and what have I to do?' An ideal gradually shapes itself before every reflective mind, of Man's function and duty, which his actual performances and even his habitual aims fall immeasurably below, and the comparison of which with the reality, fills him with grief and shame. Perhaps some unwonted sin deepens the feeling of

disparity between what he is, and what he ought to be—rouses him to a sense of danger—and puts him on efforts that he never made before. Perhaps he is awakened without passing through this ordeal of personal humiliation. He is conscious of powers that have never yet been adequately exerted, or finds himself possessed of opportunities which he has hitherto failed to improve. He looks around on a world languishing in darkness, sin and woe—yet teeming on every hand with seeds of undeveloped good, which only ask for patient and zealous culture, to ripen into widespread blessings for mankind. Can he linger in sloth and apathy, with no earnest aim or chosen work, while such solemn calls are made upon him? His self-reproach may be less for what he has—than for what he has not—done. But in this upbraiding sense of deficiency lies the hidden source of future strength. By whatever consciousness produced, whether of positive wrong or of defective goodness—and however designated in the copious nomenclature of Religion—conversion, seriousness, new birth, conviction of sin, or self-dedication to the truth—in this strong and clear persuasion of a moral purpose in existence, and in the resolute sacrifice of all worldly, selfish and carnal impulses that are at war with it—the true life of God in the human soul has its origin: and no one probably ever attained to eminence in virtue and religious wisdom, ever rose above the standard morality of his age, or wrought any lasting good for mankind as a philanthropist and a reformer—whose character had not passed through some such crisis as this.

For with all states of mind which involve the birth of a new and higher life—the idea of a Divine Inspector and Judge is deeply interfused. It is then that we hear His voice in our inmost souls, calling on us to come and serve Him. It is then that we own His presence in every deepened conviction and strengthened purpose, and in the solemn awe of religion overshadowing our daily steps. It is then that we are penetrated by the irresistible belief, glancing like heaven's lightning through the soul, that all things must work together for certain good, so long as we continue in free and unconditional self-surrender to His service. And all these influences blending into one, and acting with a single impulse on the mind, create the force which bursts the bondage of former habit and sets the bias of the character in a new direction. The sentiments which possess the soul, on the first experience of this change—are a grave and earnest sorrowfulness—humiliation before God—tenderness of heart—fervent prayer—moral watchfulness. The soul for the time is broken and cast down, and waits for encouragement to look up and proceed. Such is the natural expression of this first stage of the religious life. We must not rest in it. It is but preliminary. It marks transition. It is an effervescence of strong emotion, which must be fixed in principle and condensed into habit, or it will evaporate and pass away. Some forms of Religion, not perceiving this, have taken these transient symptoms for the permanent functions of the life of God, and striving to arrest it at this point, have

converted piety into one long agony of groans and tears.

(2.) The resolution to serve God having been made, we come now to the ordering of the outward life and the discipline of the affections in accordance with it. The life of God must be deep set in firm and steadfast principle, and must be built up and fortified on every side by virtuous habit. Habit and principle are not indeed the same thing with the spirit of Religion; but they are indispensable conditions of its secure and continuous existence. They define and protect the sphere within which it lives and breathes, and give it free scope to act—exempt from constraint and invasion. In this second stage of the religious life, the mind is less fettered by anxiety and fear. It has more reliance on itself. It feels safer against temptation and sin. It has more confidence towards God, and greater freedom in devotion. It has less of excitement and rapture—fewer of the deep convulsive struggles of faith and conscience, which marked its opening course—but a more serene and habitual consciousness of the divine presence and of moral responsibility. This passage from the first to the second stage of the religious life, is the most critical period in the spiritual history of the Soul. It furnishes the test, whether the strong emotions which once agitated it, were merely a sudden gust that swept over it and passed away, or the harbingers of deep and radical change. The emotions, when they came, might be genuine. But did they last? Thousands have meant well, and striven for a time after the life of God. Alas!

they were open to impressions of every kind; and the latest effaced the first. They wanted fixed resolve, distinct purpose, and the power of self-denial. The world was too strong for them. They abandoned prayer, and quitted their hold on God. The false lights of ambition and vanity led them astray. Snares and temptations beset them, and they fell:—and the day that dawned so fair, went down in grief and guilt.

Nor is this the only danger that awaits men in the second stage of the religious life. They may tarry in this, as others have tarried in the first. They may never go on to perfect freedom and peace. They may remain entangled in the mere instrumentalities of Religion; and without lapsing into vice and absolute worldliness, become scrupulous and formal. They may tie themselves down to duty, and punctiliously fulfil every letter of the outward law, without the faith and the love which sanctify and gladden the heart. It is of immense importance to the religious sentiment in this phasis of spiritual growth, that it should be associated with a rational and benevolent theology, which will divest it of all narrowness and gloom, and harmonise it with the great interests of humanity. For such a theology by unfolding a wide and cheerful view of the designs of Providence, and of man's business and destination in this terrestrial scene, quickens his onward progress, and facilitates the transition to a yet higher stage of religious development.

(3.) Arrived at this, the mind surveys the whole world in a religious light, and impregnates every

part of life with a religious spirit. In going to God, we do not separate ourselves from the world; for it is only through the world—in the very midst of its cares, temptations and trials—its active duties, its absorbing interests, and its exciting joys—that we can rightly draw nigh to God, and hold communion with Him—blessing every scene with the consciousness of his presence, and sanctifying it by cheerful obedience to his law. It is the traditional cant of a false theology, that Religion and the world are mutually repugnant. We should rather say, there can be no true Religion without the constant use and hearty enjoyment of the world. To the virtuous, Heaven is the complement of their life on earth: and our own experience must teach us, we should be wholly unfit for the exalted occupations and delights which we believe await us there, without the preparatory seasoning and discipline of the stern or joyous realities that are thrown around us here. Every one at his entrance into life, should look on the world, as a field to be cultivated and a garden to be enjoyed. All that he needs, is the religious consecration of mind and heart, to secure as ample a return from the one as is necessary for the moral purposes of existence, and to gather a rich abundance of the sweetest satisfactions from the other. He should ask himself, as the wide and varied prospect opens round him—'What am I fit for? and why have I been placed where I am?'—And when the answer comes to him from his own sincere and earnest heart, he should recognise his mission as

from God, and religiously give up all his powers to fulfil it well.

We need a wider interpretation of man's religious vocation in this life. It lies, I take it, in the zealous culture of his specific gift and entrusted talent, whatever that may be—according to his discernment of the Divine law. As the world is now constituted, men's minds are often forced down by circumstances into spheres of action, for which inclination and aptitude equally unfit them. And while this is so, patient submission and an effort to make the best of what is unalterable—are plain dictates of prudence and duty. A faithful and energetic mind will master circumstances. But as education is diffused and society developes itself, more choice of object will be offered to various talents: and even now, as far as we can, we should endeavour to put men and women to the task for which nature evidently intended them. More strongly marked character will be thus produced in individuals; and the infinite riches and beauty, with the true use and enjoyment of this world, will become more apparent to every mind. We may promote this salutary change, by dissipating the mistaken feeling which is now associated with the word respectability. Every social function is respectable, which fills its proper place, is exercised in the right spirit, and wields its appropriate talent. All things are parts of one great whole, and express together the benignant harmony of the Spirit of God. Whatever stimulates and gratifies a rational curiosity, though it yield no direct practical result—whatever awakens

taste and sentiment, or throws a grace over the coarser realities of life, if cultivated in a holy and loving spirit—is as solid a good to mankind, as the heavy drudgery which heaps up riches year after year—and may be as truly religious—may as directly take the mind to God—as the mechanical routine of a traditional piety, and the cold and listless observances which dishonour many a sanctuary. We come, through this religious consecration of life, to view the entire universe as the dwelling-place of God—conversing through nature, history and the human mind with Him—and sympathising with the filial spirits that He has placed in the midst of it, to behold his glory and rejoice in his beneficence. In nature we witness the serene reflection of his unchanging majesty and almightiness. In history we trace the grand results of his moral government, combining and accumulating from age to age, and interpreting, as they proceed, the great idea of his eternal Providence. In the workings of the human mind, we observe that He has left men, within certain fixed limits, to be their own teachers, and to profit by the fruits of their own experience. He has thus sanctioned in his own vast plan for the education of the human race, the great principles of self-reliance and self-government: yet has guarded the order of his creation, by setting bounds to the folly and wickedness of man, and through that wonderful alchemy which is everywhere at work in the moral world, transmuting their effects into means of higher good and more effectual instruction.

(4.) Prepared by the progressive change which

feeling, habit and action have undergone in this process of spiritual development, the mind passes on to the last and highest stage of the religious life. It arrives at the blessed consciousness of co-operating with God in the great design of his creation, and of being one in purpose and endeavour with Him. This consciousness is only intelligible on the supposition of man's free agency and partial independence of God. It has no meaning in the pantheistic theory. If God be always equally near to us, and we are equally a part of Him—whether we seek truth or falsehood—whether we do good or evil—it is wholly irrelevant to our actual condition, to exhort us to draw nigh to Him, and seek communion with Him. There is no room for the action of the will, and no occasion for the exercise of affection. We cannot be nearer to God, and we cannot be more remote; for we are already a portion of his living substance.

When, however, we believe, that He, the all-perfect and ever-blessed Spirit, must always immeasurably transcend our improvable but limited nature—it is joy unspeakable in our highest moods and holiest aspirations—to feel that we can voluntarily draw nigher to Him and speak with Him,—to experience the answerings of his love—and to know, that if we keep our minds in this heavenward course, we shall approach Him and become more intimate with Him through eternity. True union with God is the sympathy of our wills, and the co-operation of our endeavours, with the benevolent and glorious tendencies that pervade his works—the finite working with the Infinite—not from mechanical neces-

sity, but with spontaneous reverence and love, according to its measure of insight and power—to bring forth and realise, wherever human agency extends, that ideal of truth and beauty and goodness, which glows and dilates in ever brighter and grander manifestation on the opening vision of all pure and earnest souls, as they climb the upward path towards higher worlds and the invisible throne of God.

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III.

GOD'S DESCENT TO MAN.

JAMES, iv. 8.

"Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh unto you."

IN the foregoing discourse I illustrated the opening words of this text, 'Draw nigh unto God'—and showed what efforts man could make, to lift himself up to God. I have now to speak of the promise which accompanies that exhortation;—'God will draw nigh unto you.' There will be mutual approximation. If you earnestly aspire towards God, God will descend to meet your aspirations, and bless them with a clearer revelation of Himself.

An adequate conception of this side of the relation, is less within our reach than that of which we have already treated. When we start from Man, we have our daily experience to guide us to the truth. Our aspirations and our short-comings—our failures, prostrations and revivals—are distinctly mapped out in our remembrance; they are positive facts of consciousness, and the subject in its whole extent lies clearly and steadily exposed to our reflective gaze. It is very different, when we reverse the order of thought, and set out from the idea of God, and try to conceive of his direct action on the human spirit. We feel, that we are now approaching a theme, on

which our knowledge bears an infinitesimal proportion to our ignorance. We sink beneath the effort to grasp it. The nature which we attempt to contradistinguish from our own, is too vast to be embraced by our thought. Whatever notion we can form of its direct and positive agency on our souls, is derivable—either from some rare and blessed moments which have broken in on our ordinary mental condition with influences beyond ourselves—or from the manifold confessions of the devoutest spirits, which irreligious men distrust and spurn because they have never known a similar experience. But if God be a living Spirit—the Parent of free and responsible spirits—such a reciprocation of influence must subsist between Him and us; and the more we cultivate intercourse with Him, the deeper will be our sense of its reality, and the distincter our consciousness of His operation on the mind.

To seize a definite conception and to prevent our being lost in vague and fathomless speculation, we must confine our attention specially to the *moral* relation which God sustains towards us—as a fact, witnessed by our own experience and by that of devout men in all ages. At one end at least of this relation, we encounter indisputable realities, and get hold of truths which no sophistry can wrest from us. If men whose characters are a warrant for their sincerity, and whose understandings on every other subject bear indubitable marks of soundness and vigour—deliberately assure us, that in the highest moments of their being, when the soul most fervently aspires towards God, they have been conscious

of an accession of spirit and life to their moral energies, which they had never found any mechanical effort of self-discipline—any mere volition, however earnest and sustained—at all adequate to produce—we have an attestation to the reality of the Divine agency on the human mind, which cannot be questioned without shaking the foundation of the largest part of that knowledge, on which in our intercourse with one another, we are compelled to rely.

First of all, then, let us endeavour to apprehend distinctly the difference of *our* relation to God as *moral* beings, and that of creatures which are either inanimate and unconscious, or actuated by simple instinct alone. Beings of the latter class—that is, all beings, so far as our knowledge extends, beside ourselves—sustain one uniform and unalterable relation towards God. What they were from the first, that they still are. They keep their original distance from God, which is incapable of either increase or diminution. The law of their being has been established once for all, and by that they unchangeably abide. There is a part too of Man's nature which stands in the same immutable relation towards God —subject to the mechanical, chemical and physiological laws which embrace in one unvarying cycle of cause and effect, the whole of the material and animal creation. Up to this point, the Divine agency has limited itself to a fixed order of manifestation: what it is now, we rely on its continuing to be, so long as the present universe exists. But above this lower part of Man's nature which connects him with the laws of matter and the region of simple organ-

ism—there is a sphere of action into which God has infused a portion of his own free energy—a sphere, where will begins to operate—that new and mysterious power, which affects human relations with God and renders them fluctuating—which can draw up the heart into the closest intimacy with its Parent Spirit, or throw it off to a distance in which the consciousness of the relation becomes almost extinct.

Will is the ruling power in Man; the functions of intellect are its ministers. His worth or his worthlessness as a moral agent, must be estimated from the habitual attitude of his will. Will, however, is not wholly lawless and unconfined. It acts within prescribed limits and on fixed conditions. There are convictions of which man's mind cannot divest itself, and which his will more or less assumes in all its resolutions; though it may sometimes act in defiance of them, and by continued inattention, make them faint and dim. It is through such convictions, that the Spirit of God has immediate access to the human soul. There is, first, the sense of an agency external to man's will, and mightier than it—in which the belief in a Sovereign Mind—a God—has its source. In its essence, this sense is perhaps inextinguishable:—but as, on the one hand, it may be obscured and weakened to apparent annihilation; so, on the other, through the exercise of reason on the order and harmony of visible phenomena, and the habitual verification in them of the deeper faith which springs from the interior consciousness of mind itself,—it is capable of development into the clearest and most undoubting conviction.—There is, secondly,

the sense of the broad distinction between right and wrong—as the subjects of a free choice, to be finally appropriated by the will. Whatever actions and affections dependent on will, distinguish themselves to present apprehension, as fit or unfit to be done and cherished under the circumstances given—excite in our minds a feeling of approval or disapproval which they cannot lay aside, though in particular cases, where self-interest is strongly at work, they may attempt to stifle or disguise it.—There is, thirdly, a sense of subjection to law—of responsibility for voluntary acts to a Higher Power—an apprehension of final retribution, corresponding to the moral order of the universe—which cleaves to the mind through all the sophistries of scepticism and all the shifts and difficulties of a troubled and adverse life—and in which, down to man's lowest estate of despairing and hardened unbelief, they who have skill to probe the human conscience, may yet find undestroyed the seed of a belief in immortality. These principles of faith—these tendencies (if we may not give them a more positive name) towards a recognition of the great spiritual realities of our being—are imbedded firm and deep in the bottom of every human soul—put there by the hand of God himself—landmarks bounding in the dim region of our moral agency, which may at times be covered over and transgressed, but can never be torn up and carried away.

Such in its essential features is the constitution of the nature which is fitted for communion with God—which has the promise, if it draw nigh to God,

that God will draw nigh to it in return. We have now to consider, in what way this response of God to the aspirations of the human soul, becomes known. We discern it in a deeper and tenderer sense of his presence and operation, as a living Spirit—first, in things fixed by immutable laws and foreign to ourselves—and secondly, within the sphere of our personal consciousness—in things dependent on our own will and effort. When the spiritual eye is opened by faith, a new and more glorious world reveals itself. We no longer see in God's workmanship and ordinances, a mere combination and arrangement of material forms, impelled by dead forces, whose results can be calculated by the processes, and expressed by the symbols, of science—but through them we discern a deeper reality, living and working behind—modes of God's own agency, wherein He limits and qualifies His exhaustless energies—subjecting Himself to the restrictions of undeviating law, that He may furnish a discipline for the culture of finite spirits—and shrouding his glory in a corporeal veil, to spare the weakness of our mental vision. God—who in the cold gaze of the philosophic intellect, retreats far away into the viewless depths of being, and is but a name for some mysterious, inexplicable Power—dimly apprehended by the understanding and wholly unfelt by the heart—now comes back as a living Presence into the midst of his creation, to revive with a genial warmth the chilled and awe-struck spirit, and draw it forth into grateful and happy communion with its Parent Mind.

Now first Nature breaks the eternal silence, and finds an interpreter in that highest poetry through which God reveals his hidden thoughts to the awakened soul. This is not a mere æsthetic feeling. It is something purer and loftier than the simple emotions of taste. Else the most picturesque eye would be the unfailing attendant of the devoutest heart; and the rarer the beauty of the external scene, the deeper would be the impression of the unseen God. But it is not so. It is not the snow-peak alone cleaving the blue vault with its dazzling whiteness—nor the dark pine woods that girt its base—nor the rumbling of the distant avalanche—nor the roar of the torrent in the deep ravine—nor the sweet sunlight reflected with a vivid green from the mountain-slope—nor the quiet tinkling of the herdbells—nor the cheerful sounds of men and dogs mingling with the village chimes from the vale below—as they enter the mind through the charmed avenues of sense, and breathe into it a thrill of Alpine freedom and joy—that suffice of themselves to inspire the severer and holier feeling which shook the breast of the poet, when he owned the solemn presence of Deity in the awful solitudes of the Grande Chartreuse.* For these are impressions which all must experience—the devout and the sceptical alike—whose perceptions have not been brutified by appe-

* 'Præsentiorem conspicimus Deum
Per invias rupes, fera per juga,
Clivosque præruptos, sonantes
Inter aquas, nemorumque noctem.'

Gray.

tite or deadened by a sordid worldliness. They are a preparation and a help to piety—a soil where the devotional sentiment, if cast into it, will grow, and where it will be cherished, when already sown; but they must not be confounded with it. He only is filled with the true spirit of devotion, who recognises in the outward forms of beauty, the mind of Him, who has chosen this mode of intercourse with his trustful and adoring offspring. Amid the grandeur and loneliness of Nature, the souls of such men rejoice in the companionship of the Spirit of Nature. There is a deep worship within them, though no audible prayers go forth at the lips. As heart answereth to heart in the converse of men, so they are conscious of a reciprocated sympathy with God: and from these ministrations at the fragrant altar of the great temple of the universe, they carry back with them a holier influence to consecrate the ordinary duties and affections of the world.

This devotional enjoyment of the visible works of God, is a sentiment peculiar to Christianity, and those prophetic influences which preceded it in the mind of the Hebrew race. We find nothing corresponding to it in the remains of classical literature. In the sacred odes of the Greeks and in the descriptive poetry of the Romans, there is not a passage to remind us of the sublime bursts of pious feeling, kindled by the aspects of creation, which break forth continually in the Psalms and that wonderful poem of Job. The reason is obvious. Polytheism could not fix the religious affections with such intense concentration on a single object, as is required to

awaken the profoundest veneration and awe; nor amid the varied scenery of nature, could it inspire a calm faith in the omnipresent guardianship and blessing of one Almighty Father. Its fabulous legends excited the imagination with their sensuous pictures, but left the affections untouched and met with no response in the highest moral feeling. The purest minds shrank from their bewildering influence, and sought relief from the painful ideas of imperfection and strife, in the desolate unity of a mystic pantheism. The origin of a new feeling is due to the influence of a more spiritual Religion. We may even trace the rise of that sentimental taste for beautiful scenery, which so remarkably distinguishes the modern from the ancient mind—in the writings of the Christian Fathers of the fourth century—Basil, Chrysostom and the Gregories—those accomplished men, who united a classical culture with the Christian faith, and brought the sentiments of a warm and elevated monotheism, refined by literature, to the contemplation of Nature.* This delightful taste seems to have a natural affinity with Christian devotion—even in the more ascetic forms of its manifestation. It is perceptible in the youthful fervour of the piety of St. Bernard. Under the severest exercises and mortifications of Citeaux, his spirit was still open to the softening influences of forest scenery, and he declared, he had often found his holiest inspirations in the vast silence of the

* See the observations of Humboldt on this subject (Cosmos, Vol. II. p. 25. English transl.), with the beautiful extract from a letter of Basil to Gregory Nazianzen.

woods of oak and beech which sheltered his retreat from the world.* Nor can it be a mere accident, that the remains of our ancient abbeys—consecrated in the purity of their original intention to contemplation and prayer—should so constantly occur in the bosom of the loveliest valleys.

But when the spirit of devotion is once awakened, it finds a beauty everywhere, because it beholds in all things the visible footsteps of God. The common heavens with their ever-varying light and shade—fields and rural lanes, such as embrace every town and village with their verdant cincture —all the ordinary haunts and habitations of men—lie warm and sunny and beautiful in the spirit's own brightness, and suffice for its serenest gratification. In the monotonous levels of our central England, Doddridge and Cowper asked for no grander objects to make them conscious of a Divine Presence, but as they strolled along the tall hedge-row, or gazed on the slow-winding stream, gave up their souls to

Neander's 'Heilige Bernard' (s. 6. with note 4.) 'Believe me on my own experience,'—he wrote in later years to a speculative theologian—'thou wilt find more in the woods than in books; trees and rocks will teach thee what thou canst never learn from masters'—ep. 106. This was the doctrine of the banished duke in the forest of Arden: and Wordsworth says—

'One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can.'

Elsewhere he calls himself one

'who loved the brooks
Better than all the sages' books.'

fervent communion with the Father and rejoiced to feel themselves dwellers in His House.* Nay, the city itself is not unblest with these heavenly inspirations. That gush of human sympathy that brought tears into Charles Lamb's eyes, when he mingled in the living tide which pours through the streets of London, and he felt his heart beat responsive to the warm pulse of joy as it throbbed past him†—what was it—but the vivid consciousness of God—the breath of the Father, softening the bosom over which it swept, and filling it with his own merciful tenderness towards the great family of man?—God comes down to us and visits us, when these pure and loving emotions take full possession of our souls:—and the life of God is then begun on earth—heaven is already opening its flood of joy on the heart—when that spiritual consciousness which once ebbed and flowed and left us at times hard and dry, swells up into a full and constant stream, and spreads its calm and equable blessing over the broken surface of our terrestrial course.

Our intensest conviction of the presence of God—our clearest persuasion that He has drawn nigh to us—is not, however, when we are the quiet and contemplative spectators of his works, or the passive recipients of outward influence—but in those higher exercises of faith which engage our wills, and put us on virtuous effort, and excite us to active co-oper-

* See the characteristic letters in Doddridge's Diary and Correspondence, Vol. IV. pp. 124 and 211. Cowper's Task abounds with illustrations.

† Lamb's Letters and Life by Talfourd, Vol. I. p. 213.

ation with Him—when we seek Him and believe that we have found Him, in the glad appropriation of every duty, and the cheerful acceptance of every sacrifice, which He demands. It is in crises like these, that the Spirit of God descends into the hearts of the faithful and devoted, and endues them with a power and a wisdom not of this world. They are perplexed with anxieties and fears; but they commit themselves in simple fidelity to Him;—and peace comes back to them again. They could not see their way; but they asked in faith for guidance;—and light once more descended on their path. Beset with snares, they felt themselves weak and frail; but they sought God in prayer;—and His presence was realised, and new strength was at their side. Guided by an honest reason, and true to the voice within, they have surrendered themselves to faith:—it is a lamp to illuminate their way, and a spirit and a power to control and shape the outward tendencies of things. Their whole spiritual being is drawn up to God, and replenished with His fulness. Mighty in him, they go forth to master difficulties, trample down temptations, endure afflictions, and do the whole work that is confided to them.

Every self-sacrifice to right and truth—every high and earnest effort of heroic duty—brings with it a witness of the sustaining strength of God, and draws Him down into closer communion with the believing soul. When Lindsey forsook the Church to which early attachment and worldly interest so strongly bound him, and at the bidding of con-

science chose poverty and probable neglect for his worldly portion—can we doubt, that he had a redoubled consciousness of the Divine presence and felt the Father a living comforter to his soul—at that trying moment, when amidst the farewells of weeping parishioners, he bent his pilgrim feet from the venerable House of Prayer and the comfortable home to which so many tender memories clung, and threw himself on the uncertain accidents of a cold and unsympathising world?* When Clarkson knelt on the sod, and in the face of Heaven vowed to consecrate his life to the abolition of the traffic in human flesh and blood—did not that prayer spring from an absorbing sense of his spirit's union with God, and bring down as its response a holier impulse and diviner strength to go and achieve the blessed work of justice and mercy?† In devout natures, the love of God ripens into an ardent attachment which can replace every other affection. It reconciles them to neglect and privation in the world, and cheers them in solitude with a constant feeling of invisible companionship and sympathy. The hymns of the Wesleys, thrown off from the heart under the daily experience of scorn and persecution, overflow in every line with the rich unction of this passionate devotion.

There are undoubtedly great differences of original temperament in this respect. Some minds are

* Belsham's Memoirs of Lindsey, ch. ii. p. 84, with note, recording the testimony of an eye-witness.

† History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade, Vol. I. ch. vii. and viii. See also Lamb's Letters and Life, Vol. II. p. 118.

spontaneously more devotional than others. But perseverance in uprightness from religious motives is sure, in the natural order of spiritual development, to issue in a deepened consciousness of God's immediate access to the soul to sustain and comfort it. This susceptibility of religious impression and spiritual insight varies also in races of men, as well as in individuals. We find it in its highest form among the ancient Hebrews—connected with the recognition of one God, and of his intimate relation to their moral condition. It was the foundation of the prophetic faculty so powerfully and wonderfully exercised by the greatest minds of that remarkable people. Nowhere in the world's history do we meet with an order of men who can be compared for depth and energy of spiritual influence, with the ancient prophets of the Hebrews. Not altogether does the original gift or aptitude appear to to have been dependent on moral qualifications. Hence we read at times, even of true prophets, whose whole character it is impossible to commend. It was evidently, however, enfeebled and dimmed by moral neglect, and then only assumed its highest clearness and force, when it co-operated with a pure and upright will, and put forth its energy in a holy and self-denying life. The recorded oracles of the Old Testament lead plainly to the conclusion, that the essence of the prophetic faculty consists in intuitive perception of the fundamental realities of the invisible world—the unity and spirituality of God—His Providence and moral rule—man's personal responsibility to him—the sure retri-

butions of a sovereign justice—and the inward peace that must be found in the enjoyment of the Divine acceptance and blessing. The sense of these realities seems to belong more to the native constitution of some minds than of others, just as there are men who, by their organisation have a readier apprehension of the relations of sounds and the harmony of colors :—and the original pre-adaptation to discern them, is the root of the prophetic character—the germ of that spiritual affection which aspires after intercourse with God, and draws Him down into a a closer and more living communion with Man. Where this spiritual pre-disposition co-exists with the greatest purity and power and disinterestedness of moral character—where there is the most sustained and strenuous effort to rise up to God, bringing back the largest and most direct action of His Spirit on the soul itself, so that the Spirit is not stinted in its flow, but cements the Divine and the Human into a perfect harmony—there all the conditions of a complete prophetic manifestation unite—there we behold 'the desire of all nations'—that ideal of Humanity which is the object of yearning and aspiration to every devout heart. It is the satisfaction of these highest demands of man's soul in Jesus of Nazareth, which is the ground of our faith in him—calls forth our sympathy and our trust—and bids us own and accept him as the Christ—the moral Saviour of the world.

A true prophet acts on elements of kindred feeling in less gifted and awakened souls. By his attractive force in word and deed, he draws them out

of darkness and degradation towards the light and eminence of his own more favored being; and as they approach him, and more freely sympathise with him, causes the blessing of God to settle on their minds, even as it rests on his own. Yea, as they abide steadfast and faithful to their heavenly calling, and the spirit of Christ enters into and renovates their hearts—they rise up step by step to the height of his own prophetic vision—till they behold and meet and bow their faces before the living God, whom he has evoked from the dark deeps of the universe, and made visible to the human soul.

This clear and vivid consciousness of the Divine presence is like the breathing of a new life and a new spirit into all things. When it comes to us, it transforms the universe. We are no more the subjects of dullness, apathy, gloom, or fear. Who has not felt the difference of acting from the heart with conviction and sympathy, and acting as a mere slave to authority in the dull mechanism of routine and habit? Such is the difference between the awakened and the unawakened soul. Do you desire an innocent relish of this terrestrial life? Would you taste the blessing that is so richly infused into the universe? Seek and cherish the visitations of the Parent Spirit. He is the inner light that shines through all things grand and beautiful. His is the impulsive energy that prompts whatever is noble and glorious; and His the plenteous joy that gushes forth in our pure affections and bathes the soul in its most exquisite happiness. All that gladdens and

elevates your being—all that lifts you above the meanness and baseness of the world—all that binds you to the sanctities of duty—all that soothes and blesses you in the bosom of household love and in the society of gifted and virtuous spirits—comes to you from God; is the inspiration of your Father descending on your soul; the token of His presence; the witness of His sympathy with those aspirations of your higher nature which will fit you for never-ending intercourse and communion with Him.

IV.

CHRIST THE MEDIATOR.

1 Timothy, ii. 5, 6.

"One God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all."

It may be deemed an objection to founding any Christian doctrine on these words, that they occur in the only one of thirteen epistles bearing the name of the apostle Paul, the authenticity of which has been gravely controverted by some learned men in recent times.* Without, however, insisting on the fact, that these doubts have not been universally or even generally shared—it may suffice to reply, that the writing, whoever be its author, is unquestionably very ancient, and represents the feeling and opinion of the first age of the Church. Moreover, the doctrine set forth by the text, is substantially in unison with that of the other Epistles, and with the pervading tenour of the New Testament. The term mediator is twice used in Galatians of Moses, as the introducer of the Old Dispensation (iii. 19, 20); and three times in Hebrews of Jesus himself, as the mediator of the New (viii. 6, ix. 15, xii. 24). Twice

* The reference is to Schleiermacher's criticism, 'Ueber den sogenannten ersten Brief des Paulos an den Timotheos.'

in the Gospels (Matth. xx. 28, Mark x. 25,) has our Lord spoken of his death, as a ransom paid for many. There can be no reasonable doubt, therefore, that the doctrine of our text is a doctrine of genuine and primitive Christianity.

In this doctrine the grand and prominent idea is that of mediation, as fulfilled and completed by the willing sacrifice of life to religious duty. Man in his highest mood of thought, aspires to God. God meets and accepts the sincere aspirations of man. A mediator is one who by the influence of his life and doctrine, quickens, facilitates, and fixes this spiritual intercourse between the soul and its Creator. Let us notice the three points specially brought under our view by the text, in the mediatorial office of Christ.—First, he stands *alone*. 'There is *one* mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.' This can only refer to unrivalled pre-eminence, not to exclusive function. For all higher minds do in fact mediate between their less gifted fellow-creatures and the great realities of the invisible world. The sages and poets of heathendom kindled the first glimmerings of a religous life in fierce and brutal natures, and made them capable of civilisation. Moses and the prophets were the mediators of a truth, that struck deeper into the heart of humanity, and prepared it for higher spiritual development. On their foundation Christ erected his Church as an universal and final dispensation—offering to all who accept him as the Sent of God, the surest medium of access to the Divine Presence.—Secondly, he is a *human* mediator, 'the

man Christ Jesus'—not a being from another sphere, an angel or a God—but a brother from the bosom of our own human family—exposed to our temptations, touched with our griefs, and sharing our affections—who goes in front of the host of immortal spirits—the sinless captain of their salvation—to cheer their hearts, and guide their steps, and bear up their prayers to the Father's throne.—Thirdly, 'he gave himself a ransom for *all*' who embrace his offers and will hearken to his voice. He brings from God a general summons to repent; and with that he conveys through faith, a spiritual power to shake off the bondage of sin, and put on the freedom of a new heart and a new life. He is a Deliverer from the power of sin and the fear of death. This is the *end* of his mediation. This is the redemption of which he paid the price. His death cheerfully met in the inevitable sequence of faithful duty, was only one among many links in the chain of instrumentalities by which that deliverance was effected. It was a proof, such as could be given in no other way, of trust in God and immortality, of fidelity to duty, and of love for mankind. In those who earnestly contemplated it, and saw all that it implied, it awoke a tender response of gratitude and confidence, which softened the obdurate heart, and opened it to serious impressions and the quickening influences of a religious spirit.

Such were the actual workings of the death of Jesus on the minds of simple and devout believers; such were the spiritual realities grasped and appropriated, amidst a mass of extraneous conceptions in

which they were enveloped and disguised. The execution of Christ as a disturber of the established order of things, between two common malefactors—was an offensive image—from which, in its naked baseness, the mind of Jew and Gentile equally recoiled. When, therefore, they looked upon it afterwards from the higher ground of faith—they clothed it with a mystical significance, and associated it with elements of belief still subsisting in their minds from an earlier and more rudimental dispensation.* The whole public and sacerdotal religion of antiquity, whether Jewish or Heathen, was based on the idea of atonement and propitiation—the necessity of appeasing with sacrifice the wrath of Deity excited by human sin; and so deeply had that anthropomorphic conception rooted itself in the mind of the multitude, that it was impossible even for the energy of a heaven-descended gospel to extirpate it at once. Thus, higher and lower conceptions of God's relationship to his creatures, still maintained a latent antagonism in the popular creed. Simple and earnest believers, obeying the spontaneous impulse of old associations, and unconscious of any inconsistency with the juster principles which they had more recently imbibed—spoke of the death of Christ, as in itself and directly a ransom of the forfeited souls of men, from impending destruction—a propitiation, which took away all hindrance to

* The epistle to the Hebrews—written probably under the influence of an Alexandrine Judaism—exhibits this intermediate state of mind, transferring to the Gospel with a spiritualized application, ideas and feelings that had been cherished under the Law.

a free communication of the Divine Mercy, and put men in a condition to receive its refreshing streams on their cleansed and justified souls.

This supposition of an admixture of foreign elements with the predominant purport of the glad tidings of Divine Love, accounts most naturally for the appearance of certain passages in the New Testament, which only by a forced and doubtful interpretation can be brought into accordance with what we justly accept as the fundamental doctrine of Christianity—the free, unpurchased mercy of God. Left to themselves and the free development of the spirit of Christ—the vital elements of gospel truth would long ago have blighted in their mighty shadow, those growths of Jewish and Heathen superstition, which shot up beneath them in the unweeded soil of humanity. But the perverseness of theological science systematised alike the false and the true, the transitory and the permanent, and inscribed them all with a title of equal authority. And in later times a narrow and scrupulous bibliolatry has fancied it more reverent to extort from words a meaning they were never meant to yield, than to admit in a single instance, that Scripture could be the vehicle of notions which belong to a by-gone age.

Two considerations are of much weight in connexion with this subject: (1.) the deep craving after a spiritual mediator in the popular mind of all ages, with the evident need of one, fully and healthfully to develope its religious life: and (2.) the marvellous fulfilment of the required conditions of such

mediation in the person of Christ. The religious sentiment abandoned to merely natural influences, without the guidance of some mind of profounder spiritual insight, is ever prone to diverge into the opposite extremes of polytheism and pantheism. We conceive it to have been the special function of the old Hebrew prophecy, in the order of providence, as it still is of the Gospel of Christ—to uphold the mind in a just mean between these extremes—to exclude on the one hand material representations and multiform conceptions of Deity, and on the other to fix the mind with a definite faith, on God as a person—a conscious Mind—surveying with a moral interest the voluntary acts of his creature, man. Where the native impulses of the multitude have been exempted from this higher direction, we find them either absorbed by a bewildering superstition, or lapsing into a powerless unbelief. If men are governed by their feelings and their imagination, they make to themselves gods of their sensations, and endow with the reflected attributes of their own being, the agency in nature—terrific, voluptuous or beneficent—by which they are themselves most intensely awed and captivated and thrilled. The natural man puts himself forth without disguise in his primitive faith and worship. Diversities of individual character, the hereditary temperament of race, influences of climate and locality—the mountain ridge or the luxuriant vale, the woodland or the boundless steppe—all have their effect in shaping out the objects of human adoration, and determining the rites and offerings by which they are to be con-

ciliated and appeased. The old polytheism was as varied in its aspects as Nature herself. It was Nature in the plenitude of sensuous wealth, projecting the shadow of her gorgeous but coarse imagery on the pure expanse of the Infinite; not the might and glory of the Infinite coming down on Nature with resistless influence to chasten and spiritualise her wild energies, and humble them in reverent submission to the law of the Eternal. Here bewildered parents placed their writhing infants in the burning arms of Moloch, to the hideous clang of temple-music; and there brutal voluptuaries wallowed in the orgies of Astarte and Mylitta. The stern war-god, whose priests circled his altar with their frantic sword-dance*—the Arcadian Artemis, prolific of life and brooding over the elemental seeds of things in the depth of sylvan glades and the ooze of fertilising springs†—Pan, the fancied echoes of whose mystic pipe were heard in sheltered vallies amidst the bleating of lambs and the lowing of kine—and Apollo, whose radiant car as it rolled through the heavens, poured down a flood of life and joy on the beaming face of this nether world—were more than names, in the days of early and unquestioning faith, to adorn a poem or give a religious solemnity to the usages of life:—they were a reality—a living presence—to the fond and credulous votary, who be-

* Bellicrepa saltatio. *Ἐνόπλιος ὄρχησις—Festus.*

†'Der alte Arkader sich seine Artemis als eine an Quellen und Teichen wohnende Naturgöttin dachte, welche die Jungen des Wildes, wie das Menschenkind, tränkt, und erzieht und gedeihen lässt.'—*K. O. Müller, Wissenschaftlich. Mytholog. p.* 76.

held in them the reflection of his own sentient being, and worshipped them for their congeniality with his spontaneous belief.

But there were minds of another order—contemplative, and capable of reasoning. With them the religious sentiment took a different direction, and tended through successive phases of opinion, to self-extinction. They observed, how the apparently conflicting agencies of nature ultimately mingled and coalesced in certain broad and pervading results—till they attained to the conception of a vast connected whole, wherein but few could recognise the expression of Sovereign Mind. They who were reputed wisest, called it Nature, and for the most part meant by that, an eternal Law—an all-controlling Necessity—within whose changeless bosom things rose and perished and rose again in never-varying cycle—but void of consciousness, to sympathise with the beings it embraced—void of will, to command a moral obedience—and void of love, to inspire a responsive affection.

In neither of the extremes now described, can minds in which the moral sense is at all awakened, or which have any glimpses of spiritual insight, rest content. Perplexed and ill at ease, they look round for some guide to the highest truth—some authentic interpreter of the great mystery of their being. There is a craving for light, and a willingness to accept it from any quarter, if only it can offer reasonable credentials of a heavenly source. As the old faiths die out and philosophy proves its hollowness, every one of holy and benevolent life is listened to

with deference, and gladly welcomed as a messenger from God, who gives evidence of authority, to declare His will and manifest His presence, and to define and make plain the terms of intercourse between Him and His creatures. It is in the clear recognition of a living God, and of His personal relations of authority and affection towards the human race—that the power of Religion consists. Religious natures demand something more than the bare abstractions of reason. They desire some visible token of the unseen Presence—something concrete and historical, which they can lay hold of and distinctly realise to the mental eye. They feel it a relief, in the spiritual vastness which encompasses them, to be able to rest their bewildered vision on an actual personality, clothed in the form of human affections and moving within the limits of human events, through which they can become more vividly conscious of their individual relation to God, and discern as by a light from heaven, what they must be and do to enter into loving communion with Him. In perceiving their ignorance of many things seen to be of vital interest to their supreme well-being, they gladly throw themselves on an authority, which is proportionate to their awakened moral sentiment, and which commands their fullest reverence and trust.

On feelings allied to these, priestcraft and sorcery, it is true, have often fastened themselves, and acquired a withering and debasing influence over the mind. But the want expressed by them, is not the less real, because selfish and ambitious men have

abused it to their own ends. When the direction given comes from a pure source, and is associated, as in the case of the Hebrew prophets, with a monotheistic and profoundly moral faith—it is of immense and most beneficent influence in the development of the religious life. In the Israelitish race, and those portions of the human family that were influenced by them, it cherished the elements of true Religion, and kept them from being scattered and lost. It trained up the mind to a moral ripeness for the comprehension of Christ's wisdom and for sympathy with his sanctity and love. It may be alleged, that all this, however useful in its time and place, was but a rudimental and transient process; that Christ appeared, did his work and passed away; and that having proclaimed great principles, which delivered mankind from the thraldom of a priesthood, the degradation of idolatrous polytheism, and the mechanism of outward law—his further mediation between God and man became unnecessary and can have no relation to us. In reply to this suggestion, let us examine what are the facts of history and the testimonies of experience?

When the Church interposed its veil of sacerdotal rite and mystic symbolism between the mind of Christ and the mind of his flock, cut off the living intercourse of the Spirit, and closed up the light of the Eternal Word in the darkness of an unknown tongue; when the multitudes were again surrendered to their natural impulses, scarce checked by a faint tradition of the primitive Gospel and the instructions of a clergy, only less ignorant than them-

selves, or if blest with more light in the upper grades, too proud and too timorous to descend into the conflict with popular barbarism: what did Europe behold? The reappearance of one of the evils, which it had been the object of Christianity to expel—the rise of a new polytheism, which brought back again the hero-worship of antiquity—covered the land with strange altars—repeopled its woods, its fountains and its hills with a fresh mythology—and driving the Father out of sight into the hidden depths of the universe, transformed the lowly and gentle Christ into a being of terrible and vengeful omnipotence, and embodied what yet remained of the beneficence of Deity, in the maternal sweetness and purity of the Queen of Heaven.

It is urged, that Science was the destined corrective of these tendencies? But does Science, in dissipating superstition, always spare the vitality of Religion itself? Has not experience shown, that the recognition of a Christ, a personal, historical manifestation of the living God—is still needed for the preservation of a true monotheism in the soul of man? Observe the present movement of philosophic intellect in Europe. As Science disjoins itself from Christianity, or merely allows it a place among the general agents of civilization—a power developed in the natural order of things, not an influence sent down from heaven, to reconcile humanity with God;—the result is rarely the adoption of a pure and elevated theism, but too often the reduction of deity to a mere force—the substitution of mechanical law for living will—the exclusion of intelligence

from the foundations of the universe, and the recognition of it in man alone, as the true divinity of our world, the consummation of its progressive development—bringing with him into the system of things, an agency before unknown, and nowhere else to be found.

But let us leave philosophers out of the question, and think only of that immense mass of men for whose maintenance in the paths of virtue, Religion is more especially required. How do they stand affected towards a mediator? Are they in spiritual matters able to walk alone? Apart from that authoritative judgment which millions of the best minds with unexampled unanimity have pronounced through a long series of ages, on one pre-eminent life, how can they select for themselves, amidst so many competitors for their confidence, the one Teacher and Guide who will most safely conduct them in the road to Heaven? If they throw off the yoke of Christ, what can they assume in its stead? We are reasonably required to suggest a substitute for that which is renounced. The multitudes cannot be left to themselves. They want a standard and a direction; and the existence of such want leads us to expect—or all the analogies of creation deceive us—that the means of satisfying it will not have been withheld by Providence. Confining our attention now to that portion only of the human race with which we by descent and circumstance are immediately connected—let us consider how Christ who is still mentally present with us in the New Testament, seems qualified, by the adaptation of his person and

work to our spiritual necessities, to act as a mediator between us and God.

The spirit of Religion exerts its strongest influence through the moral part of our nature. When moral culture is neglected, or outrun by a disproportionate development of mere intellectual activity, those highest and most ethereal feelings which have God for their object, evaporate and vanish. Great mischief has ever resulted from this want of harmony in the culture of the faculties; and we are not without experience of its effects in the stage of civilization at which we have now arrived. The lust of wealth, the constant struggle for social position, the fever of competition, the contagion of popular bewilderment, the absorbing spirit of association—even the discoveries of physical science and the triumphs of art and the marvellous helps which they afford to material progress—distract the mind from self-introspection, and amidst the glare and whirl of outward phantasms, almost deaden it to the perception of the great invisible realities that lie enshrined in the depths of conscience. Our civilization, therefore, wonderful as it is, is not an unmixed good. We are less thrown on ourselves than formerly. We have too many pretexts and temptations to devolve our personal responsibilities on Society. We are but units—each severally of small account—in huge masses of consolidated interest, to the weight and workings of which the predominant philosophy chiefly directs our attention. The soul once so precious even in the humblest of mortals, that minds as richly endowed as a Baxter's, held it their first duty

to watch over it and pray for it, till they had satisfactory evidence of its conversion—has well nigh become a nonentity. The creeds of former generations —undermined and rotten—are giving way,—and so far, they might go without regret: but too often they carry away in their ruins, the seeds of that faith in the divine and eternal, without which our nobler nature starves and perishes. In the face of such facts as these, can we doubt, that there is still need for mediation between man and God—for some stronger infusion of spiritual influence into human affairs—for the living action of Christ's own spirit—no more intercepted by priests, or darkened by dogmas, or choked with prejudice and ignorance—on the open and expectant souls of myriads of tried, tempted and suffering men?

The first thing is—to set vividly before them, and make them feel, the great and lovely virtue there was in Christ,—and by this exhibition, to quicken their sense of moral deficiencies, and excite their moral longings and aspirations. Contrition, humiliation, deep-felt unworthiness and sin, consciousness of the wide chasm between themselves and God—such emotions are in most men the beginnings of a religious life—the moving of the Spirit over the dark and troubled waters of the soul: and in these emotions the want of a Mediator—some heavenly Counsellor and Guide—is intensely experienced—One who shall take us by the hand, and lead us up to God, and give us assurance of his Fatherly compassion and abounding love. Overwhelmed with shame and remorse, the soul feels itself shut out from God.

How can it gain access to Him? Christ rises before the thoughts of the smitten and downcast penitent—the Friend of sinners, and the Comforter of the sorrowing—the Perfection of Holiness, but also the Perfection of Love. To the bruised heart and smarting conscience he applies the healing balm of Divine Mercy. The felt adaptation of his Gospel to the deepest wants of our souls, disposes us to embrace it as a word of peace from Heaven: and the secret witness of the Spirit seals it as authentically divine. The burden is taken away. Free access is opened to God. Despair vanishes; hope springs up in its place; and power from on high gives new vigour to commence a nobler life. Thus Christ offers himself to the soul, as a spiritual medium of approach to God; fixes its upward gaze; defines its apprehensions; sustains its soarings towards the Infinite; discloses to the inward eye, things invisible and familiarises them to the affections.

Christ is fitted for this office of spiritual mediator—as a man—not a mere man, but the Ideal of Man—living, as no other hath ever done, in pure and unbroken harmony with the Father—advanced to that point in the order of moral development, where God and man are at one. As Christ was not a God, his genuine service can never degenerate into idolatry. The orthodox do not worship a deified man, but the one true God through some mysterious process united with man. Christ was the highest prophet of Monotheism—a servant and worshipper of the Universal Father.—Neither was he a priest. Only by figure and comparison, in a single book of

Scripture, is he so designated. He does not interpose to prevent our immediate intercourse with God, but simply conducts us to Him. When he has drawn us up to his own height of vision, and given us confidence to look in the face of our Father, he steps back into the same line with ourselves, and delivers us over to God, that our souls may henceforth subsist, like his own, in direct contact with the Eternal Mind. Christ stands before us in the Gospel, as the Head of the great brotherhood of man—displaying in perfection the spirit which should circulate through the subordinate grades of humanity and consecrate them to the service of God—charged with functions and invested with responsibilities, which we in our narrower range of action and influence are equally bound to take up and fulfil. The Divine in him does not overpower the Human, but coalesces with it. His very miracles do not raise him above humanity; they only expand its sphere, and heighten its manifestation. It is the light of human affection which makes them beautiful. They are not some vast overwhelming influence descending at once from the skies on the lowly bearing and humble lot of the houseless prophet of Nazareth—but gently follow his steps wherever he goes, like a halo of love from the depth of his human heart—the exhaled essence of his inmost being, radiating from its material vehicle, and expressing the mysterious interfusion of his spirit with the Omnipresent Mind that breathes through nature and moulds it at will.

The great task of his life—mediation between

God and man—was crowned and completed by his death. In the preaching of his apostles he is proclaimed to us as the risen and ascended Christ—the glorified inhabitant of a heavenly world. And that is the relation which he permanently sustains to us, as the Ideal of our perfected humanity. Into that glorious world, he constantly beckons us to follow him. A dark and fearful tide rolls between that realm of light and ours. Thousands cross it every hour, and vanish to our mortal eye. But the voice of the Holy One comes to us in that awful transition with words of comfort across the abyss. If we are his, we need not fear. If the mind that was in him, be also in us, we shall be sharers of his immortal inheritance. He has gone before, and opened to us the gates of a boundless future: and the brief record of his earthly course reveals enough of his trials and his sorrows, and of that patient spirit of love by which he wrought wisdom out of them, and transformed them into blessedness—to give us clear insight into the duty and destiny of man—to connect in one solemn view the preparations of time and the issues of eternity—to show us how we must act and suffer through all the vicissitudes of this terrestrial scene, to be united at last with him, our soul's best Friend and holiest Counsellor, in the rest and joy of our Father's house.

V.

THE HARMONY OF THE DIVINE AND HUMAN IN CHRIST.

LUKE, xxii. 41, 2, 3, 4, 5.

"And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed,

"Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done.

"And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.

"And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

"And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow."

No doctrine was a more fertile source of unprofitable controversy in the early ages of the Church, and in its orthodox enunciation has more perplexed the mind with irreconcilable contradictions, than that of the two natures in Christ. Yet there is a view, in which it may be shown to possess a certain affinity with ultimate truth—to fill a place at least in the order of thought, where a truth should be. The co-existence of two natures—or more correctly of two elements, two tendencies, in one nature—is the attribute of universal humanity, and therefore pre-eminently of Christ, as its ideal—its highest embodied manifestation. In him alone we perceive a perfect union of the two elements. He alone

blends and harmonises the two tendencies. Our language is deficient in terms that mark with precision the distinction between the elements in question. Divine and human are inadequate ; for some infusion of the divine enters into every true conception of humanity. The apostle Paul most nearly perhaps expresses the distinction that we all feel without being able exactly to explain it, where he contrasts the *spiritual** with the *natural*,† and says —'that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.' (1 Cor. xv. 46.) To avoid unnecessary deviation from established modes of speech, and to bring the view here proposed, into more direct comparison with the orthodox theory, I shall not wholly abandon the terms—divine and human: but when they are used, it must be recollected it is in the sense which Paul attaches to spiritual and natural. What that sense is, and how it applies to the person of Christ, I shall now inquire.

If there be a God, a spiritual world and a future life—and our Christian faith implies, that we assume these truths—then we do not misrepresent man's condition, by supposing him placed on the verge of two connected states of being in the ascending scale of creation—a link between the angel and the brute—the most highly gifted tenant of earth, qualified, on his departure from it—if its preparatory discipline has been rightly used—to join the ranks of higher intelligences. This principle of progressive development—this consciousness of des-

* Τὸ πνευματικὸν. † Τὸ ψυχικὸν.

tination for a more exalted future—involves an antagonism in man's nature, when its moral feelings have been once awakened, between the instincts and their resulting efforts which form the basis of his existence here, and the aspirations which are continually bearing him out of the present, into the hope of a more perfect state hereafter. In this struggle, his moral discipline consists. On no other terms could he be at once a dweller on earth and an heir of heaven. His privileges and his perils —his sublimest joys and darkest sorrows—joys and sorrows of whose intensity inferior natures have no perception—are a consequence of the critical position which he is appointed to fill. He is a compound of the natural and the spiritual. We recognise in him at once the merely human, and an incipient influence of the divine. The natural or simply human is not, as a popular theology represents it, in itself evil. In its original destination, like everything else which proceeds from God, it is good. It only becomes evil by the abuse of our free agency. It is as much an essential part of our being, as the spiritual—and is no less acceptable to God, and consistent with the purest virtue, when the actions which it prompts, and the dispositions which grow out of it, are kept within their proper limits, and made to subserve the higher ends successively disclosed by the spiritual. It embraces all our implanted appetites and affections—all our instincts of self-preservation and self-advancement—the propensity so inherent in every one, till checked by ulterior considerations, to revel in the pleasures of the

present moment, and to extract all the advantage and all the honour and all the enjoyment possible, from the means and opportunities placed at our disposal in our passage through the world. On the other hand, we discern in the spiritual element of our being—the restraining sense of a moral law—the supreme authority of conscience—the inextinguishable feeling, that we are destined for something beyond the present and the actual—and all those higher sentiments which are involved in the solemn consciousness of God, envelope us with the awe of his presence, and in the grand idea of immortality, indicate the final end of all our efforts and aspirations. This spiritual element marks our affinity with God. It is the witness of our sonship. It is the medium of our intercourse. It is the link which unites the human with the divine. One system underlies another in the order of spiritual development. The presages of a higher life grow up and discover themselves amidst the many chilling and repressive influences which invest this terrestrial scene, as the germs of a coming spring are matured in the bosom of the frozen earth, and sometimes put forth a solitary blade and a pale flower ere the inclemency of the winter is past.

All spiritual existence is of the same quality, presupposes the same conditions, and is subject to the same inherent laws.* Spirit is the active principle of the universe; and activity, if it is to issue in order and harmony and not prove self-destruc-

* Συγγενὲς πᾶν τὸ λογικὸν.—*Marc. Anton.* III. 4. 'All minds are of one family.'—*Channing.*

tive, must of necessity operate within certain fixed limits, which constitute its fundamental law. Simple intellect—the devisal of expedients and the combining of powers to effect contemplated ends—may exist in infinite gradations from the least advanced of the human race up to God. But for the control and regulation of intellect in all its developments, it is clear that a supreme and absolute law must subsist, to bring its diversified results into unison—to keep it from disorganizing the system of things, and producing universal chaos. Without further pursuing this abstract subject, every thoughtful mind will perceive on reflection, that those modes of action or of relation towards other beings, which are expressed by the terms rectitude, truthfulness, holiness, love (if indeed they be not all ultimately resolvable into some more comprehensive idea), constitute a law arising out of the nature of things, immutable and eternal, which is as binding on the Sovereign Intellect, as it is on the smallest and feeblest minds, to the extent that they are conscious of its existence. If we suppose any one of these qualities absent, and represent to ourselves the effect of its suspension on the course of events; we shall at once understand, what is meant by the necessity of an ultimate moral law. On this law the universe is founded. It is the organic principle which presided at the creation of the world. It is the wisdom which 'the Lord possessed in the beginning of his way, before his works of old' (Prov. viii. 22); which 'was present with Him, when he made the world, and which knoweth and understandeth all things' (Wisdom of

Solomon, ix. 9, 11). It is the Divine Word or Logos of the Alexandrine theosophists, which John beheld incarnate in Christ,* as the perfection of Wisdom: and the germ of which, implanted in the souls of all men, when it attained a certain ripeness, made the most advanced of the heathen sages—in the judgment of some early fathers—the partakers of an anticipated Christianity.† It is the heavenly seed which buried for a time in the furrows of human ignorance and carnality, grows up into the harvest of eternal life, and engrafts the soul into the divine nature. It is the 'true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world' (John i. 9); or, as the same idea is expressed by the son of Sirach, 'the wisdom which is with all flesh, according to the gift of the Lord, and which He hath given to them that love Him' (Eccles. i. 10).

The fundamental, universal distinction, then, of spiritual existence is this Logos or moral law, which binds and governs the operation of all intellect from God to man, and is reflected with increasing clearness in the conscience of every progressive soul. To the range and development and inherent re-

* Ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο.

† The passages in Justin Martyr expresssng this sentiment, are well known: Apol. I. 46. (Οἱ μετὰ λόγου βιώσαντες Χριστιανοί εἰσι) and II. 8. According to him, the difference between Christ and others, is that between a whole and a part—τὸν πάντα Λόγον and σπερματικοῦ Λόγου μέρος;—which is identical with the doctrine of John (iii. 34.) 'God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.' We discern a kindred feeling, as to the universality of the Λόγος, in the prophet's comprehension of Egypt and Assyria in the same blessing with Israel.—*Isaiah* xix. 23-25.

sources of intellect, it is impossible to assign any limit. What it must be in Deity, as the absolute Being, transcends our conception. We compare the Divine mind with ours, that we may have something within the grasp of our reason to dwell upon; but the finite cannot measure the Infinite; and did we not ascribe moral attributes to God which excite our sympathy, and by implying consciousness and will include the idea of personality, God would be wholly incomprehensible. The Logos bridges over the chasm that separates Him from us. The affections of faith and love which it involves—faith relying on the tendencies that incite us to good, love sympathising with the beneficent harmony that pervades His creation—fill up the vast interval, and though still immeasurably distant from his absolute perfection, bring us into vital communion with Him by holy earnestness of aspiration and endeavour.

From the complete ascendancy of the spiritual over the natural element of humanity, subjecting all the lower impulses and activities to the supreme authority of the moral law, and removing every obstacle to a perfect harmony of the human with the Divine will—result the earthly perfection of man and his fitness for a higher stage of existence. Here we get the true point of view for apprehending that peculiar and undefinable character which in the feeling of all Christians, belongs to the prophet of Nazareth, and which they intend to express, when they speak of his divinity. It is the entire subordination of the natural to the spiritual in his life. It is the interfusion of the divine and human in one

tranquil and harmonious flow of being. It is the final conquest over self and sense and fear in his soul, that love and holiness and joy might take their place. It is the manifestation of the Logos in its fullness;—the enjoyment of the spirit without measure;—the full development of all the lineaments and proportions of the moral nature of man;—so that for once humanity might behold all its spiritual relations perfectly sustained, and have a momentary glimpse of the blessed union that is possible between a pure mind and God. But this divinity grew out of the human elements that were at its base, and that alone make it intelligible and instructive to us. It was the perfection of humanity, as such perfection is conceivable within the limits and conditions of this introductory existence. It was the perfection of one intended to show us, how man must pass from earth to heaven, and may be for ever united with God. Christ underwent all our trials, temptations, sufferings, fears. Evil approached; he felt its power, or he could not have been man: but it was repelled before it touched the inner sanctuary of the soul. Its dark images glanced for an instant over the mirror of conscience, but left its surface unstained. It was the discipline of a living virtue. It tested the strength and purity of the spiritual within him, and gave him new courage to rely on its future support. When he drew to the close of his mortal career, and looked back on the task of duty which had been entrusted to him—he could say—in the full consciousness, that the spiritual had achieved its victory over the natural—what

no other member of God's human family has ever yet said—'it is finished.'

In this sense, the divine and human were harmonised in Christ. The subject is perplexed by transcendental questions about the possibility of perfection in any being of finite powers. I speak here of a relative perfection—such as man is capable of, and can conceive. We can imagine a human being, placed under given circumstances and possessed of certain endowments, fully acting up to all the moral requirements of his position, showing that the power of the Logos penetrated his whole soul—and living in unbroken harmony with the higher relations of the spiritual world. Such a perfection, we believe, was exhibited by Christ—and by Christ alone. We look on him as the realisation of a human ideal. He stands immeasurably in advance of the moral attainments of the world. We need such an example to incite our aspirations and shape our endeavours. On the verge of that other life, he illuminates the path by which we must reach it through this. He marks the mysterious passage from time into eternity; shows us what we must look for, and how we must prepare: and then, casting off the habiliments of mortality, vanishes in that light where God is all in all. Christ, as the incarnate Logos, was the consummation of moral excellence, so far as that is compatible with the unalterable conditions of humanity. Learning and science and artistic skill are not embraced in the attributes of the Logos. In these respects, Christ was a man of his own age and nation—believing and speaking on all speculative topics—on every subject that

stood outside the conscience and its eternal relations with God—like the multitude among whom he dwelt. Through this inevitable limitation of his intellectual being, he acted with more power and effect on the spiritual condition of his contemporaries; and from the marked contrast between the grandeur and purity of his religion and the simplicity of his worldly wisdom, he has acquired a more than earthly influence over the mind of ensuing generations. The unrivalled pre-eminence of his spiritual example we cannot now deprive of its claim to a higher reverence, by imputing it to extraordinary philosophic culture or the perceptions of an intellect raised far above the standard of his time.

For his authority as a prophet, it was necessary, that Christ should have lived among us as a brother, in the bosom of our human sorrows and joys; it was necessary also, to raise us above our earthly life, that he should wear our nature without contracting impurity—gentle and sinless as some celestial visitant—in uninterrupted communion with God. This perfect unison of the natural and the spiritual—such a contrast to the ordinary condition of the human soul—was discerned from the first with a mingled reverence and love, by all who contemplated his character: but the proper value and due relation of the two elements were soon misunderstood; and controversies thence arose which have ever since distracted the Church. Natural and spiritual were interpreted as human and divine: human and divine were next translated into man and God: and then the question came, how natures of such immeasurable disparity

could co-exist in one person. To restore harmony where all seemed incurable discord, this expedient was resorted to: one element was exalted almost to the annihilation of the other. An extreme section of Alexandrine theologians made Christ all God, and in their excess of mysticism, dissolved his humanity into a name. Some divines more exclusively intellectual reduced him to a mere man,* into whose mind certain dogmas had been specially injected, that he might become the head of a new religious school, but whose intimate union with God, beyond the needs of that particular function, they did not admit. In this view, the peculiar beauty of Christ's character, as executing its Messianic function in a succession of moral conquests through entire sympathy with the Divine Spirit, is wholly lost; for it withholds from him that general, constant, all-pervading intercourse with God, which alone fulfils our idea of the highest prophet of humanity, and justifies the assertion of that oneness with God, so distinctly claimed for him by Scripture. The Catholic Church, true to its maxim of suppressing heresy by combining contradictions, put an end to the controversy by its authoritative promulgation of the doctrine of two na-

* This view of Christ's nature was expressed by the term, ψιλὸς ἄνθρωπος. Some parties holding the doctrine and distinguished for their devotion to human science, had a separate church in Rome at the beginning of the third century. They were called from their principal teachers, Theodotians or Artemonites, and were simple Humanitarians. They declared, that their opinions were those of the apostles, and had ever been regarded as such, till the time of Victor, Bishop of Rome, A. D. 185. An account of them is given by Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.*, V. 38.

tures, one finite the other infinite, and each perfect, in one person. To express this astounding doctrine it created the strange term, God-man. The union of natural and spiritual elements which in Christ's life so beautifully realises the highest conditions of man's terrestrial existence—was thus turned by the perverseness of theological subtilty, into an absurdity. Perfect God must mean the whole of God and nothing but God; perfect man, the entire man and only man. The two natures are completely distinct. The attributes which constitute the essence of the one—eternity, infinity, absolute knowledge and absolute power—exclude their opposites which enter into the definition of the other. If persons mean—as to be intelligible, it must—the possession of one consciousness and one will, it is evident, that natures so immeasurably distant, so irreconcilably unlike, as God and man, cannot have a common subsistence in one person.

Let us turn from the Church to the Gospel—from the nicely-poised determinations of Leo* to the broad and simple statements of the Evangelists—and be content to accept the facts, so accordant with the inner witness of our own being, which they distinctly hold up to our view. The beautiful narrative from which our text is taken, strikingly exhibits the operation of the two elements which I have described, in the mind of our Lord. We see him wrestling with distrust and fear—striving after, and

* The letter of Pope Leo I. to the patriarch Flavian, settled the doctrine of the two natures, and placed it in that inappreciable centre between divergent heresies, where it was ultimately fixed by the decision of the Council of Chalcedon, A. D. 451.

at length securing, a divine peace. So viewed, this passage of his life becomes a lesson full of comfort and of joy for us. The terrible trial was at hand. His prophetic eye discerned the ghastly forms of woe, as they came thickening on him through the night: and for the moment his soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death. He had not one near, on whom he could rely. A sense of desolation and loneliness came over him. His companions were wearied and asleep; and he withdrew from them, to seek counsel and solace with the one unfailing Friend. He felt a weight on his soul. He knew what a duty God had cast on him, and anticipated the great issues that were depending on its faithful execution. Its magnitude enhanced his fears, and made him doubt himself. He was troubled also by the weakness and irresolution and childish unpreparedness of those whose thoughts he had tried to raise to the height of his own great cause, and to inspire with courage and self-possession proportionate to the coming danger and trial. It was the hour of his enemies. The power of darkness was upon him. His highest faith was momentarily eclipsed. Presence of mind, strength of purpose, capacity of endurance—all seemed to be giving way. Nothing remained, but to throw himself on God—for human weakness to lay hold of the divine strength. Humility and devout submission were the virtues that now culminated in his soul. They checked all rashness; they beat down all presumption; they broke forth in that one deep and earnest prayer—'Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me; never-

theless not my will, but thine be done.' In that breathing of profound and self-renouncing humility —in that entire reference of all things to God—went forth the word that brought back strength to the failing spirit. Sad and solemn rose its accents to heaven on the stillness of the midnight air—with ever-deepening fervour as the sense of weakness and peril grew;—till God's presence was fully realised, and a helping angel stood at his side; and then all was calm—and the terror passed away. And so it is ever with man, when the highest duties test his allegiance, and perils at which the stoutest quake, are a condition of their performance. There is a fearful struggle within, that bewilders the brain and makes the heart sick; till the will is firmly fixed, and the final resolve is taken, and God is trusted and obeyed with implict faith. Then strength enters the soul, and the Spirit conquers. This is that victory of faith 'which overcometh the world.'

Rarely is this highest of victories achieved without terrible accompaniments even of bodily exhaustion and pain. The flesh sympathises with the struggles of its nobler companion. Sweat and blood attest the inward agony. The immortal overpowers the perishable. The ethereal spark is too quick and strong for its earthly vehicle, which melts and wastes away before its consuming energy. Yea, our very infirmities bear witness to the might of the spirit, which tramples on the body, and subjugates it to its will, and asserts its own kindred with the eternal and divine. When the agony has been undergone, and the conflict is past—sweet indeed is

the final peace. It is the peace of conscious strength, reposing after victory, and calmly awaiting the certain issue of God's merciful providence. Then comes the assurance of faith and principle—the steadfast resolve—the hand prepared for every good and noble work—the soothed and trusting spirit that shrinks no more at the aspect of danger, but looks out on all things with an eye of quiet and hopeful love. Then the martyr-soul goes back from the solitude of prayer and faces the world anew, filled with a holier vigilance and tenderer solicitude for those who are yet weak and timorous and dull; and when it finds them 'sleeping for sorrow,' it puts words of warning in their ear, and cries—'Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.' Then—whatever may yet remain of pain and grief and peril for its further trial, it can meet it all without dismay. With spiritual insight it discerns in these things, the orderings of that invisible hand which it rejoices to own and obey—the transitory process of earthly discipline, which is still needed to draw out its strength and complete its purification—a renewed chastening of yet unvanquished passions and infirmities, that it may enter with enlarged capacities of action and enjoyment on its immortal heritage. Though earlier associates in the work of God should forsake it and relapse into the world, it is disquieted no more. Its human sympathies are with them still, and its prayers go up for them in love to heaven. From all disappointments and sorrows it has a refuge in God. A holy tranquillity possesses it. In desertion and solitude

it is sustained by the thought—'I am not alone, for the Father is with me.'

Such is the significance of the scene in Gethsemane. It exhibits the highest form of humanity sustaining the heaviest load of woe, and displays the strength and peace that result from the triumph of the spiritual over the natural man. Who can look back on this scene without an increase of love and reverence and trust? Who can behold in Christ such a beautiful harmony of the human and divine, without feeling it a glory to partake of a nature like his, and acknowledging with a deeper gratitude and more solemn awe the inspirations of the Parent Spirit which are the source of all that is good in him and us? If we substitute for this view, the orthodox theory of his nature and of the conflicts it underwent in the closing scenes of his life—we meet with nothing that is in harmony with our human consciousness, or expresses the universal and enduring relations of man and God. A single, unparalleled prodigy is offered us instead, which may work on the imagination, but finds no response in the interior sense of our moral being. To estimate even the divine, we must rise out of the bosom of our familiar humanities. Our native feeling of moral fitness has been deadened by the artificial treatment of theology. Were deep-fixed associations removed, which have been engrained in our minds by the systematic teaching of centuries—no parent could look with approval on a history which sets before us the agony of a guiltless child, bearing the weight of others' sins to satisfy the inexorable de-

mands of a Father's wrath. We should rather think of Christ as wearing our nature, not as a penal robe, but in proof of its native excellence and destined glory—to make us partakers of his own divine spirit—to lead us on through life's trials and difficulties—and introduce us into the happier scenes of our Father's courts above.

We need increased sympathy with the spirit of Christ. We require to be constantly roused by his warning voice. Too often we lie oppressed and drowsy on the ground of duty, when danger is near and unsuspected temptation is stealing upon us. We resign ourselves to a world of dreams, and let great opportunities go by: and when principle demands resistance and self-sacrifice, we betake ourselves to ignominious flight. We too easily persuade ourselves, that life is a pleasant and easy task. It is an awful mistake. Is Heaven so slight a boon, that we can leisurely walk up to it and appropriate it in a life of comfortable sloth and self-indulgence? Virtue, it is true, carries its own recompense along with it; but it must grow out of labour and self-discipline. When these have become a second nature, and brought the natural and spiritual into perfect harmony, then, and not till then do they surround our being with a perpetual bliss. In the most favoured of outward conditions and with the happiest native temperament, life's great purpose cannot be accomplished without the strenuous exertion of all our faculties—without constant vigilance, and perpetual sacrifice of personal inclination, and unceasing resistance to evil without and within. The best men

are they who have made the greatest effort for truth and right, and drawn wisdom out of the sorest trials. Our nature will not bear a softer treatment in this life. Unbroken ease with exemption from disappointment and trial, and immediate command of all the sources of enjoyment—relaxes the springs of virtuous activity, nourishes the taint of selfishness, and makes life a tasteless experience. The soul is nursed for heaven by the discipline of a sacred sorrow. The look that is fixed on immortality, wears not a perpetual smile; and eyes through which shine the light of other worlds, are often dimmed with tears. And yet when the countenance is earnest and sad, unutterably blessed—not to be bartered for any earthly good—may be the peace within. What could we take in exchange for pure and noble principles—for faith unfailing—for love unquenchable—for that spirit of prayer which goes up unceasing to the Father, and brings down his silent blessing on the heart? Child of affliction, bewail not thy lot. Seek out the wisdom that is hidden in it. Pursue with firm step and steadfast aim, the immortal issue to which it leads. Cherish the peace thou wilt ever find in a pure and loving heart. Thy Master was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, yet the peace of God filled his spirit in the agony of Gethsemane and the death-struggle of the Cross.

VI.

THE DISTINCTIVE AND PERMANENT IN CHRISTIANITY.

HEBREWS, xiii. 8.

"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever."

IT has been the practice of apologists to separate Christianity by as marked a distinction as possible, from every other form of Religion, and to represent it as a fact *sui generis* in the order of Providence :— the stupendous efficacy imputed to it, and the startling array of prophecy and miracle alleged on its behalf, seeming equally to sustain its extraordinary character, and by their very contrariety to the natural course of things, to give it an overwhelming claim on the reverence and submission of mankind. This position, however, it has been found impossible to maintain in its original integrity, against the invincible remonstrances of reason and the ceaseless advance of science. Each generation has witnessed, with the diffusion of knowledge, a constant subdual of tone in the champions of revealed religion ; and capitulation is now sometimes talked of, where uncompromising defiance was once hurled back on the hostilities of the secular intelligence. On the other hand, in the same degree that Christianity is made more human and more natural, brought

more within the limits of the universal agencies of Providence, and reduced to the level of our ordinary sympathies and apprehensions—it appears to lose the distinctive character which should signalise it as a direct communication from God, and simply to fill its place as one among many provisions equally divine for the moral and spiritual culture of our race. We seem thus caught within the horns of a dilemma. If we assume the old ground, and insist on *peculiarity*,—if we assert that Christianity is a fact apart from all other facts, having an origin, a doctrine and a warrant exclusively its own—we put ourselves in opposition to the general reason and conscience of mankind, and as the spirit of self-reliance spreads, and larger views of the Universe begin to prevail, we must expect to see an ever-increasing number of thoughtful and serious men abandon our cause and join the ranks of unbelief. If again we regard the *whole* of Providence as an *equal* manifestation of Deity—if we look on Christ's ministry, not as the introduction of a new and special mode of human treatment, but merely as an element of more than ordinary moral influence embraced, contemplated and provided for in the *general* system of the world—we deny the power of revelation to proclaim a new law to our spiritual being, and seem bound in consistency to abandon much of the language that is popularly used respecting it.

This is a question of great interest, deeply interwoven with the difficulties which at the present time perplex many a devout and earnest mind. Let us turn our attention to it, and see what light can be

thrown on it. The ultimate test and assurance of Christianity, as of every other doctrine that is offered to the acceptance of mankind, must be found in its agreement with the universal and irreversible laws of our mental and moral being. Our own nature is the first and nearest of all realities—the corner-stone of the entire fabric of truth. It is a prior authority to any communication that can be brought to us from without. If it be so weak or so corrupt that no trust can be reposed in its instinctive beliefs and inevitable conclusions, it cannot judge of the trustworthiness of statements made to it by others. By the supposition it is incapable of distinguishing between truth and falsehood; and the argument that would infer the indispensableness of divine revelation from the assumed impotency of human reason, is self-destructive. If it be affirmed, that man's nature is miraculously changed by faith; who is to decide on the reality of the miracle? The assurance can at least belong only to those who are the subjects of it. By the fact of their change, they are insulated from the general mass of human nature. The unchanged remain in their previous state of helpless incapacity. No effect can be produced on them by the experience of others; and a process of which they have no conception, they will be quite as likely to ascribe to delusion as to miracle.

In what sense, then do we assert, that Religion is natural to man, and has its origin and warrant in the primary laws of his being? We must distinguish here between those spontaneous tendencies which grow out of our original constitution, and

necessarily determine our ideas to associate themselves in a particular order and issue in a particular result, and those inferences which the logical faculty derives from the facts collected by experience, and generalised by the laws of association just described.—Religion is at first a spontaneous *feeling* in man's mind ; only at a later period, is it aided in its development by the auxiliary operations of reason. It is not contended, that the new-born babe brings with it into the world, the ideas of a God, a moral government and a future life—as they exist in the mature mind of an intelligent and well-informed Christian : but simply that it possesses in the rudiments of its mental organisation, a seed and radicle of spiritual growth, which, exposed to the needful stimulus of outward impression, shoots up and blossoms and fructifies through an inherent necessity, into more or less perfect forms of moral and religious belief. The point to be insisted on is the *inwardness* of spiritual conviction—that it does not depend for its existence on the accident of external instruction, nor owe its certainty to the conclusiveness of any inferences deducible from facts that fall under the cognizance of sense. Three grand principles of belief which lie at the foundation of our rational being, arise in this manner out of the internal and organic working of the mind—the recognition of a Supreme Intelligence in all things—reverence for the moral law mirrored in the human conscience, as an expression of his Will—and the expectation of some future state where the realities of man's condition will be more in accordance with the ideal after

which he is formed to aspire. These principles in their origin are little more than the *material* for belief—dim yearnings and vague apprehensions which are drawn out and fashioned by the understanding according to the extent and character of its own development, and finally cast into permanent formulas, as a standard for the popular religion, by the plastic agency of some powerful mind. It is evident, that reason would have nothing whereon to act, if certain indisputable data were not included in the primary intuitions of consciousness. There must be a limit somewhere. We must come to assumptions at last. If we cannot trust, and will not accept, the spontaneous and universal suggestions of our own nature —even when fruitful of consequences that are in harmony with experience and reasoning—nothing remains for us but self-surrender to hopeless scepticism.

It is important to notice in this connexion the different functions of the prophet and the philosopher —two characters, that have exerted a powerful influence on the actions and opinions of mankind. The prophet deals with the primary intuition; the philosopher, with the secondary generalisation and remoter inference.—The prophet gives the incentives to action; the philosopher supplies matter for reflection.—One recurs to the heart and the conscience as his medium of influence; the other addresses himself to pure intellect. The prophet operates on masses of men, and fills them with a new life, and sends up from them a wide, pervading influence—an exhalation as it were from the popular heart—which

silently penetrates the whole length and breadth of Society. The philosopher speaks a higher language intelligible only to the select and initiated few: he has his favourite modes of expression and peculiar processes of thought, which wear an irreligious aspect in the eyes of the multitude, and inspire them with superstitious aversion; and he must trust to the changes of future years, for transmitting any portion of the light which he has struck out, into the dense shades of error and prejudice which are spread over immense spaces in the realms of mind.—Yet these two characters, placed as they are at the opposite extremes of Society, maintain an unbroken and mysterious communication with each other, and reciprocally furnish the conditions of their safe and healthful action on the excitable atmosphere of humanity.—The prophet brings out and cherishes its moral elements—its living sense of God and duty and immortality—and delivers to his distant co-operator the broad, unquestionable facts of human consciousness, which he needs as a sure basis for his speculations. The philosopher, on the other side, cautiously accepting the material transmitted to him, explores it with the keen edge of his analysis, and pares off from the vital substance of truth the impure accretions which it has contracted in the grosser atmosphere of the popular belief, and which must check its growth and expansion when placed in the thin pure air of a higher region.—And so they work into each other's hands:—the prophet mightily active below in the broad dark depths of the world, amidst the strong instinctive impulses—

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the sorrows, weaknesses and sins—of ordinary men; the philosopher serenely contemplative on the solitary illuminated peak which towers into the skies, with a few gifted spirits at his side and his eye ranging over a vast horizon—transmitting at intervals some higher intelligence to the toiling multitudes that are spread over the vast plains at his feet. Their work, however, is progressive: they will not always be at the same distance from each other.—From opposite sides their operations slowly approximate, and tend towards future union in a common field,—where facts attested by the universal consciousness which no scepticism can deny, will be finally accepted by the experienced and disciplined intellect, and wrought out into conclusions which the most fastidious philosophy will be glad to admit. Then at length the nuptials of faith and reason, so long desired and so long deferred, will be celebrated amid the jubilees of a reconciled and rejoicing creation.

The subject leads us to speak now of the prophetic character. Christianity is a manifestation and a result of the prophetic spirit.—It is the distinction of the prophet, not only to possess the primary religious intuitions in peculiar vividness and intensity, but to have the power of quickening them into new life in other minds, and of irradiating with their influence all his representations of man's duties and destiny. This prophetic faculty is a gift from God—an effect of that closer intimacy which some minds are permitted to hold with the Sovereign Spirit. In no other light can we regard it.—

It is an endowment original and inexplicable—not to be attained by study or thoughtfulness or the treasures of Science. 'The spirit bloweth where it listeth, and thou canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth.'—It may have been—there is strong historical testimony, that it was—in the earlier ages of the world, accompanied by outward signs and wonders. These, however, are not necessary adjuncts to its existence. It may exhibit its genuine power and operation without them. Specifically calling into exercise only one element in the manifold nature of man, it would be unreasonable to expect of the prophetic gift, that it should in the same measure fill the intellect with scientific light. Its office is simply to give a right *moral* impulse to the intellect, and throw it into the direction in which it *ought* to work. Unavoidably, therefore, in remoter periods, all prophetic manifestations, whether in the shape of doctrine, ritual or institution—though ever possessing at bottom some elements of primary truth—have blended themselves with the error and ignorance of the times and shot up into divers forms of superstition.—Hence a need for the later operations of reason, to separate the true from the false—to retain the divine, and cast away the purely human. Reason has not, however, always recognised the proper limits of its task, but occasionally carried the work of destruction into the very substance of truth itself.—In the infancy of the world, when reason was weak and knowledge very limited, and men, like children, were thrown more on the instincts of their nature—the prophetic faculty must

have been far more widely exercised than the zealous advocates of particular revelations are willing to admit, in disseminating the elements of moral and spiritual culture and building up from its foundations the great fabric of society.—Surveyed in this broader view, we may regard the Mosaic and Christian dispensations as pre-eminent examples of a general type of phenomena—the purest and most powerful manifestations of a spirit that is co-extensive in some degree with humanity itself, making man, wherever he exists, essentially a religious being, capable of sympathy and intercourse with the Omnipresent Mind.

It remains to be shown—what there is distinctive in Christianity; why it has claims on our trust and reverence above other religions; how it stands out from the universal religious principle with a character of its own; how it calls forth and realises to the individual consciousness, at once in the greatest purity and with a surpassing power, those primary intuitions of a living God—a divine law—and a future retributory existence—which are the essence of all religion. The foundations of Christianity were laid broad and deep in the doctrines of Hebrew prophecy:—that there was only one God, the universal Spirit;—that he sustained a close personal relation, as moral governor, to those whom He had constituted his people;—that the distinction between them and other nations was temporary;—and that in the coming kingdom of God—that grand theme of prophetic promise and encouragement—the converted Gentiles would be united with the worshippers of

Jehovah, in one blessed and glorious society. Out of these rudiments Jesus and his followers expanded a religion for the world. The national God of the Jews became the Father of mankind. The narrow peculiarity of a favored race was enlarged into the brotherhood of all men. For the promise of earthly prosperity, gross and perishable, was substituted the more glorious prospect of an endless life in heaven. All these doctrines, it is true, were set forth originally from the Jewish point of view, and adjusted to the Jewish belief and capacity of that first age. They could not else have come into contact with humanity or exerted on it any living power. But under this outward form, was transmitted a vital principle, capable of growth and self-development, which Providence by manifold excitements and under guiding influences, has drawn out age after age into successive results of practical and doctrinal wisdom for the nourishment of the soul. Through every phasis of manifestation the fundamental truths have subsisted in their essential strength for all who earnestly sought them.

What, then, was the actual process of the great change now wrought in society? The preaching of a crucified man;—sympathy with a loving, sinless, self-sacrificing life; faith in a perfect virtue, victorious over death, crowned with glory in heaven, manifesting the presence and the power of the heavenly Father amidst the sin and suffering of the world. And what has been the permanent result? A communion of minds subsisting under many outward forms, but still held together, amid great di-

versity of usage and opinion, by the closest spiritual ties—the same high trust in God, the same clinging of the heart to Christ, the same earnest endeavour to sanctify life's trials and duties, by making them a discipline of the immortal soul for heaven. Such is the Church of Christ. It is a communion of good and earnest men who are drawn to God in Christ's spirit and by the attraction of Christ's life. Experience shows, that there is strong need of a Church—of a community of religious exercises and influences—for the moral and spiritual culture of man's nature. It is a significant fact, that no civilised people ever yet existed without a public worship representative of the general faith. Our pious affections, our incentives to virtuous action, our hope, our trust, our love—are all cherished and strengthened by religious sympathy and religious intercourse. A Church is the embodiment in outward forms and joint devotions of our common religion. But a religion for the many cannot be furnished by an abstract exhibition of moral and religious truth. It must have its root in actual history; it must pass into some concrete reality, as a bond of permanent association—the fixed centre of human sympathies and a definite object of human reverence and love. It needs a visible authorship and head, to invest it with a distinctive character—to make it the consecration of our retrospect of the past—to wrap it in the rich and ample folds of hallowed remembrance and venerable association—and hand it down from age to age, the best inheritance of fathers to their children.

Mere science is incapable of such influences. No man reverences grammar or geometry as a tradition. Science is to each individual essentially a creation of the present. But history and memory enter into all our conceptions of a Church, and are indispensable to its specific effect on the human heart. In the peculiar character, therefore, of a Church's power over the mind, we discover the source of many noble, tender and delightful emotions :—emotions, however, which for the very reason that they are so deeply human, require to be carefully watched, lest they should engender the seeds of superstitious formalism and priestly domination. Observe, then, how beautifully Christianity in its genuine simplicity has provided for the want and guarded against the perversion. In the first place, it has nowhere expressly constituted a Church, but left such a result to the free spontaneous growth of its own creative spirit. Our religion, moreover, though issuing from a divine source, comes to us through a human channel—through the medium of a brother man, true to conscience, faithful in duty, perfected by suffering, exalted to heaven. Our bond of Christian union lies not in outward ceremonial and metaphysical dogma, but in the holiest and loftiest of all sentiments—in the love and reverence of virtue itself—in owning God our Father, under the most benignant of his manifestations—as He reveals Himself in the moral excellence of a pure and exalted human soul. While we cleave to the genuine spirit of our religion, the most fervent devotion cannot pass into superstition, but will only

incite us to stronger efforts after new holiness. In the love of Christ, faith and duty are one principle. Religious feeling reposes in peace on him; and the religious life pervaded by his spirit, aspires through him to be one in aim and effort with the sovereign will of God.

Christianity so understood combines in it all the conditions of a religion for mankind. It is historical, and yet has a power of endless adaptation to the spiritual necessities of man's soul. It holds out a definite object for the affections, and yet fixes no limit to the expansion of the sympathies and the freest exercise of the intellectual powers. It is profoundly devotional, and at the same time severely but humanely moral. Here at length Religion and Morality, so often kept wide asunder in the old sacerdotal systems, seem to have found their point of coalescence and to mingle in undistinguishable identity. In speaking of Christianity, I mean of course not the letter of its historical records, but the spirit of Christ's own life—not the particular words he uttered or the particular acts he performed in the presence of that old Jewish civilisation of Galilee and Jerusalem, but the intense consciousness of God and duty and eternal life which impregnated his whole being, and infused through his contagious influence a new soul into humanity That living spirit of Christ we may imbibe by sympathy, and transfer to other scenes, and convert into the animating principle of very different duties. That spirit, however disguised by the mystification of jarring phrases, will meet a response and a welcome from every

pure and earnest nature : and in that spirit every existing indication conspires to assure us, that the elements of a religion for mankind can alone be found. But then we must not divorce the Religion from the history which gives it substance and reality. We must not evaporate the concrete into the abstract. Religion exerts its influence not in ideas alone, but in the facts which are their visible counterpart—in the belief, that there was once a real Christ on earth—the perfection of human goodness —who taught and toiled and suffered and died, and then went to heaven in the spirit and power of God —that omnipresent Father, in whose name he spoke, and who encompasses us now, as he encompassed Jesus then, with the living tokens of his love. If we dissolve this spiritual communion with Christ, how shall we again gather together in one the scattered individualities of men's souls? Where shall we again find a head, a centre, a point of universal sympathy? Unrestrained by any combining influence, speculation will start off in a thousand divergent directions, on its headlong, wilful career. Hard intellects will engage in unprofitable gladiatorship; and the competitors for a mastery over human spirits will divide the world into innumerable sections of antagonistic opinion. Such an anticipation is no mere suggestion of arbitrary fancy; and it furnishes a strong argument for the preservation of Christianity. We acquire a new perception of its truth, and of its necessity in the order of Providence, from representing to ourselves the consequences of its annihilation.

I must add a few words in conclusion on the specific authority of Christ. We have seen, that Religion has its proper seat in the primary intuitions of consciousness, and that it is the function of the prophet, to call forth those intuitions into more vivid operation. The prophet does not convince us by strength of reasoning. We do not yield up our assent to his arguments, and measure it out by our sense of their weakness or their force; but he commands our whole being at once by a resistless appeal to principles within. He carries our inmost sympathies along with him, by the self-evidencing power of his doctrine, by the sanctity of his life, by the serene majesty of his spirit, by the intense conviction that lives and breathes in his words. It may be questioned, whether the very ablest exhibition of what are called the Evidences of Christianity, ever made a person really feel the true authority of Christ. But take up the simple memorials of his life, when your mind is in a tender and serious mood—and in imagination open your ears to the calm, majestic accents of his voice, as he delivers one of his beautiful parables, or rebukes the self-complacent Pharisee, or speaks peace to the repentant sinner—or go with him into the chamber of death, when he bids the sleeping damsel arise, and gives her back to the arms of the heart-stricken parent, and tells him Death is but a sleep—or suppose yourself at that last Supper, when he is distributing the bread and the cup, and uttering his words of parting counsel and benediction—and let these hallowed influences fall gently on a simple, childlike,

confiding heart; you will then feel what his authority is, and you will bow your soul before it, as a power from Heaven. You will feel, that it is the power which goodness and truth and the consciousness of a divine presence, must ever exert. It is the power which religious virtue always exerts to the extent that it is earnest and real, and which in Christ was so mighty to convert and to save, because in him virtue has no human parallel. In taking this view of the authority of Christ, we need not contend for any transcendental doctrine of absolute immaculateness from the birth. Christ's was a genuine, natural virtue; in making it unhuman, we only make it unreal. It is sufficient for the practical Christian, without plunging into the unfathomable metaphysics of theology—to feel that such virtue is far, far above his own, and yet what he himself must daily aspire after, if he would become a better and happier man.

When Christ took leave of his followers, he promised the Spirit to fill his vacant place, as their future Comforter and Guide: and that Spirit still abides with the true members of his universal Church. Scripture is the vehicle which conveys it to us, and through which it is dispensed and applied to every believing heart. But the true Church—the Church of mankind—cannot be nourished from a book alone, however beautiful and however wise. It demands a living ministry—the living influence of speech and act. It needs faithful, earnest, simple-hearted and devoted men—unfettered by creeds, unenslaved by forms, unawed

by hierarchies—imbibing the spirit of Christ into their deepest souls, and left free to impart it in their own way, according to their own convictions, in words of power and genuine sincerity. O may such men speedily arise for the guidance and blessing of their race—strong in faith, strong in love, strong in knowledge and intellectual power—to dispel doubt, to chase away indifference, to establish conviction, to assert the great cause of humanity and God, and to bind up in the enduring ties of a brotherly affection the broken peace and wasted energies of the Church of Christ! Through their lips may the Comforter go forth with new power among men, and guide thousands of troubled and doubting spirits to the truth which they seek, but cannot find! And we—who endure the hour of darkness and strife, and dimly discern the breaking of a brighter morn, and faintly herald its approach,—O grant that we, Thou God of mercy and of truth, feeble as we are, may be true to our convictions and earnest according to our strength, that when our summons comes, we may lay down our charge in the humble trust, that we have done what we could, and leave the great issue with Thee!

VII.

THE FOOTSTEPS OF CHRIST.

1 Peter, ii. 21.

"Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps."

The wonderful life of Christ, with its vast transforming influence on the moral condition of the world, has been viewed in two different lights by those who have looked back on it with reverence through the lengthening vale of time. They have interpreted it in a mystical or in a rational sense. They have beheld in it either a descent of God to man, or an elevation of man towards God; and they have adopted exclusively one or the other of these points of view, without attempting to reconcile them. In the former theory, as conceived by the reputedly orthodox, Christ's mediation involves a stupendous and convulsive miracle, which affects the entire spiritual economy of the universe, reversing the previous relations of Deity to mankind, and restoring the moral balance of creation. Christ steps into the place of God. The glory of his mediatorial office eclipses the brightness of the paternal throne. The divine attributes of his character absorb the moral and the human. He is too high for our sympathy and our imitation. We

stand afar off, overwhelmed with amazement and awe. Reason is confounded; and human affection is changed into religious ecstacy. The rationalist, on the other hand, disperses this mythic cloud, and through the clear transparent light of the understanding, discerns the definite outline of a human teacher and guide—a man labouring among fellow-men—a gifted sage, sent by God on an errand of mercy to the world, to give us wise and good precepts, and show us by his example the road to heaven. If this view be less kindling to the imagination, it better satisfies the reason, and more wins the heart.

Each of these conceptions of the person and work of Christ has, however, by natural reaction pushed the other into excess. Each has its side of truth, and represents a want and tendency of man's soul. For we may contemplate our relation to invisible things, wholly from the divine or wholly from the human point of view; and each survey will pass into error, simply from its exclusiveness—from its denial of the restraining influence of its needful counterpart. The system which converts Christ into absolute Deity, and supposes the whole spiritual world to have been revolutionised by his interposition, will not bear the scrutiny of an earnest reason, and evaporates into empty formulas when the strong light of science and history is cast upon it. But then the theory which limits Christ's functions and influence to those of a *mere* man—which accepts his words as the simple dictates of human thoughtfulness and sagacity—which measures the wisdom and

the rationality of his outward life by its direct conformity to the standard of our recognised morality—excludes the divine element altogether, and does not satisfy the demands of our religious nature. In the being whom we follow as our spiritual Guide, whom we accept as the Source of our spiritual life, as the Head of our Church—we naturally look for the indication of something divine. We suppose him to stand nearer to God than ourselves. He mediates for us between things divine and human, bridging over the abrupt chasm which separates them—and opens a new and living way to communion with the Father. How the example of such a being should influence us, and how we are to follow his steps—we must now show.

It cannot be too often repeated, that the influence of a prophet must be distinguished from that of a teacher. The teacher labours to persuade by arguments addressed to the reason. The prophet demands submission by an appeal to convictions already within the breast. The teacher delivers his principles as wrought out by his own study and reflection. The prophet proclaims his doctrines as truths which he is conscious of receiving direct from God.—He cannot indeed convince us of the fact, except by awakening a kindred consciousness in ourselves; and this may at first view, seem to bring down his claims to the level of the ordinary teacher, by making *our* belief the test of *their* validity.—But we can often perceive *that* to be true, and feel *that* to be right and beautiful, when once proposed to us, by a criterion inherent in our own spiritual

nature, which we are conscious at the same time we could never have originated for ourselves, and which even while we accept it on the assurance of this interior sense, we distinctly recognise as something divine—something very far exceeding our previous and ordinary condition of thought and sentiment. We all experience a lower degree of the same effect from the finest strokes of the poet and the artist. For the influence of the genuine prophet is inspiring and even creative.—He does more than impart truth from himself. He awakens dormant sympathies and calls forth kindred elements to meet and embrace it, and incorporate it with the living substance of the responsive soul.—And what holds of the prophet's doctrine, holds also of his life. For his doctrine and his life cannot be separated. His life is his doctrine in action. His doctrine is the theory of his life. Both command our reverence and our faith—not from their coincidence with conclusions which *we* have deduced from premises already embraced, but because they enlarge the basis of our conception of man's duty and destination, give us new and wider premises from which to reason—and by their kindling effect on the whole spiritual nature, infuse into it a fresher power and endue it with clearer insight. In such influences we intuitively discern the Spirit of God. They are the certain witness of a prophet's presence.

In considerations like these, we find the proper answer to objections sometimes urged by men, in whose mind the logical element is too largely predominant—that they cannot subject their reason to

any human demands on faith, or write themselves servants of any one but God himself; and that the life of Christ is placed before us in circumstances so peculiar—so deeply coloured by the accidents of his age and country and mission—as to unfit it for becoming an example to men of other times and under different social relations. The difficulty springs from the same feeling as respects both the doctrine and the life—and admits of the same reply. It does not perceive, that the authority to which assent and subjection are demanded, is, by the supposition, divine and not human—that interior revelation—that sense of spiritual truth—which God's inspiration imparted to the original organism of the human soul, and which he has enabled the prophet, by a larger infusion of it into his own mind, to stimulate into greater vigour and activity. Whether such coincidence can be discerned between what is offered from without and what is felt within, as to justify a submission to prophetic authority—must be left to the experience of each individual conscience. It is a case in which no one can judge for another. But the argument assumes, that such coincidence *is* discerned, and that the submission, therefore, is yielded not to man but to God. The objection, again, does not sufficiently distinguish between a particular precept necessarily shaped and adjusted to the occasion which called it forth, and the deeper spiritual principle which is at work in it—between a particular act, or even a particular course of action, modified as it must be by the conditions of co-existing circumstance, and the general effort and tendency of the

whole life out of which it sprang, and of which it can only be regarded as a limited and imperfect expression. It is with the inner principle and general tendency alone, that the intuitions of religion and the claims of the prophet have any concern. The adaptation of particular precepts and particular acts to the changing exigencies of society, falls within the province of the practical reason. This obvious distinction, apart from which no religious record of the Past can be of any use to ensuing generations—has been overlooked through the prevailing belief in the verbal inspiration of Scripture, and the consequent acceptance of Christianity as a positive legislation for men's conduct and opinions in detail. So closely has this feeling associated itself with the words and actions of Christ, that it still influences those who are no longer under the error which produced it, and renders them unconsciously guilty of injustice in interpreting his history.

Perhaps indeed we none of us conceive with sufficient distinctness, what it is that we mean, when we speak of taking Christ for our Pattern, Example, and Guide. A large portion of our sentiments respecting him, is derived from religious poetry, or from the rhetorical language which so liberally garnishes the popular eloquence of the pulpit. Such influence has often been beneficial in its way, and very nutritive of the devout affections; but it leaves behind it a vagueness of impression which throws a kind of mysterious haze over the relation of our Lord's example to the duty of ordinary Christians in the actual world. When thoughtful men, taking

the standard which is usually applied to this subject, compare their own circumstances with those of Christ, and perceive the amazing disparity between them—when they consider his gifts, his vocation, the world in which he lived, the persons with whom he had to deal, the whole state of manners and opinion environing him, so different from that which now exists—and observe, that there is hardly one point in his recorded life, which finds its exact parallel in theirs—and yet hear divines Sunday after Sunday in vague and pompous phrase calling on the people of this care-worn, money-getting, overlaboured nineteenth century, to shun riches and renounce the world to follow the steps of Christ and walk in all things as he walked :—they feel themselves bewildered and almost mocked by exhortations like these ; they cannot comprehend what such words mean in reference to themselves; they would fain ask—'What is it you urge me to? Consider my situation, and see if it be possible for me to do what you enjoin. Only show me, how in my circumstances I can separate myself to a life of prayer and charity and abstinence from all worldly things—and I will strive to imitate that divine Exemplar, whose beauty I willingly confess, though I feel that at present it can have no immediate application to a lot like mine.'

If, therefore, the prophetic influence which should go forth from the life of Christ, is still to exert its healing and renovating power, we must clear away the impossibilities which seem to come between it and the world ; we must show, how the words and

acts of Christ, interpreted in their true and inward sense, may yet preserve a vital relationship to the wants and sorrows and holiest aspirations of the suffering humanity which at this day inhabits the earth. The distinction already made between fundamental principles and the words or acts which are their occasional expression, suggests the mode in which this relationship may be maintained. Too formal and prosaic a view is usually taken of what is meant by looking to a life or a character as a model. It must not be understood, that a pattern is held up before us to be servilely copied, but an ideal whose spirit should be freely imbibed. What such an example can alone beneficially supply, is a new life infused into our convictions and blended with our own personality. Any other influence would be destructive of moral freedom and check individual self-development. For what is it that constitutes the man, and stamps itself on our reverence as character? Not the manners of a person—not his speculative beliefs—not his opinions in religion or politics—not simply the kind of work to which he devotes himself,—these matters are often determined for him by the accident of his social position—but the spirit which is in operation beneath the surface of his life, and breaks forth in every outward expression of it—his honour, his purity, his faithfulness, his strong affections, his expansive charity, his deep devotion, his zeal and constancy in the pursuit of what is great and noble. And so it is with Christ. What is it that thrills our hearts and kindles our imaginations in the remembrance of him, and makes us come

away from every meditation of his history, more full of tender thoughtfulness and holy aspiration? Not his outward bearing and manner of life—not his independence of a home and a secular vocation—not the particular strain in which he warned the erring and comforted the distressed—not the precise way in which he encountered his enemies and submitted to his doom—not the little incidents of his journeyings and miracles and discourses, of his death and his re-appearance from the grave—for all these might be replaced by other circumstances and a different fate, and the effect be still the same;—but the spirit of fervent love, and patient trust, and stainless sanctity, and lofty hope, and religious devotedness, which shone through these external things, and has left on them the enduring brightness of its own glory. It is the inward life revealed through the outward life—the spirit of the character illuminating all its visible manifestations—which alone affords a fruitful subject of contemplation, and transferred by a reflective understanding to new circumstances, supplies a free and living rule for the guidance of our own course.

One of the first effects of this emancipation from the dead letter of Christianity, will be deeper sympathy for many earnest and struggling minds, who feel all their moral energies crushed, and faith well nigh extinguished within them, by the dull and formal exhortation which they perpetually encounter, to conform their lives outwardly to the life of Christ. They are repelled from the effort, by a sense of its hopelessness. Our object, therefore, should be, so

to open their minds and hearts to the true reading of that richly significant life, that they may cast off their scrupulousness, and enter of themselves into spiritual communion with Christ, and feel what a virtue goes forth at every contact with his heavenly mind. Purer and simpler moral feeling, increased mental culture, a more open, rational and free interpretation of Scripture, continually referred to the eternal standard within the breast—will best effect this change, and carry thousands with undiminished fervour and seriousness out of their present spiritual bondage, to the enjoyment of the liberty which Christ's message, heard in the deep undertones of its eternal truth, proclaims to captive souls.

The study of a great and holy life, as that of Christ—is like the study of a beautiful work of Art, for the cultivation of the taste and the discipline of genius; with this fundamental distinction, however, between the two cases, that the latter appeals only to imagination and sensibility, the former acts upon the conscience and the will. But in both we equally think and feel ourselves into the hidden soul of power in the work before us. Strong spiritual affinities are awakened within us as we gaze, admire and love. We surrender our inmost soul to the profound sympathy it inspires—not to bring away in our memories, an exact transcript of its light and shade, the grouping of its forms, and the blending of its hues—but to seize intuitively the eternal laws of beauty which it exemplifies, and the sense of which, thoroughly imbibed, may enable us, though still at an humble distance, to put forth a different work in a kindred

spirit. The servile hand of the copyist may retrace every line and reproduce every variation of colour; but the life of the great original will not be there. Only he who can feel as the master felt, and has studied his works to catch their spirit, will strike out conceptions that betray the same inner life and admit of any comparison with his. The monk that fasted forty days, to rival Christ's temptation in the wilderness—the Pope who goes through the annual mockery of washing the feet of beggars—Melancthon who apprenticed himself to a baker, because he thought Scripture literally enjoined him to eat bread in the sweat of his brow *—exhibit only the exaggeration of a principle which still pervades to no small extent the usages of some respectable sects, and tacitly restrains from the full exercise of spiritual liberty, not a few who fancy themselves the most unprejudiced and free. They are all fettered by the formalism of the letter,—and show that they do not yet understand what is meant by following the steps of Christ. The unconstrained and simple-minded man, who, without suppressing his healthy interest in the world, or giving up one harmless custom or innocent recreation, goes forth with kind and sympathising heart among his fellow-creatures, to instruct their ignorance, to aid their strivings after a better condition, and to increase their means of rational enjoyment—is a true follower of Christ, and has more of his spirit than the

* The fact is mentioned by Mohler, in his Symbolik, c. v. § 44.

straightest conformer to the mere letter of precept and example written down in the New Testament.

To give example a living influence, there must be sympathy; and Christ's character is a fitting object for sympathy, because it is steeped in the affections, and redolent of love. A cold form of unexceptionable excellence would be powerless for the excitation of a kindred life. The reflection that Christ suffered for us, beautifully prepares and deepens the feeling that he has left us an example and we should follow his steps. This is the side, too, of our own nature and our human experience, on which we most need the stimulus and encouragement of a great example. We have been cast into a world of abundant sin and woe; and our highest duty is like Christ to suffer for it, that we may redeem it. The spirit of Christian sacrifice belongs to all ages and animates all pure and noble minds. It inspires the martyr for truth's sake, and the self-devoting patriot or philanthropist, and gives him courage to do his work, and confidence to ask a blessing on it from heaven. Its agencies change; its instruments vary; its trials, difficulties, snares, and persecutions are diversified with the lapse of time and the progress of civilization: but its final object is ever one, and the same—to free man from bondage and oppression, to lift up his countenance in the light of freedom and truth, to reveal to him the worth of his own immortal mind, and to show him the living way that leads to heaven and God. Varied may be the work which the Gospel imposes on the faithful soul, but its impulse and aim are un-

alterable. It is of one and the same quality—in the patient, earnest instructor of the children of the poor —in the fearless asserter of unpopular truth against calumny and misrepresentation—in the undaunted reformer of social evils and wrongs—in the patriot who lifts up an honest voice and a brave arm for right and freedom in his fatherland, and when fortune turns against him, prefers exile and poverty to the wages of shame. To all such, consoling is the remembrance and cheering the example of the patient and self-sacrificing Son of God. His words are a divine support—'Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.' His spirit enters their hearts; and it makes them strong in weakness, and gives them peace in the depth of sorrow. They rejoice to suffer with the virtuous few who in every age have contended with ignorance and wickedness, and would fain have created around them a better and happier world.

Where the influence of example is founded on the affections, and consists rather in a general impulse than a particular direction—it is even an advantage which heightens its effect, that it should be displayed amidst circumstances that cannot be directly paralleled with our own. The sympathy reaches us, but it is not vulgarised by too close a familiarity. It comes from a higher sphere, enriched with associations that bestow on it the character of a sacred poetry. We are rather attracted than repelled by the remoteness from our ordinary experience, of the wondrous scenes in which Christ is depicted to us. The greatness and singularity of his work—its serene

elevation above the low pursuits and exciting passions of the world—its suffering and its martyrdom —while they show very clearly, that we cannot be exhorted to walk literally as Christ walked, give at the same time a peculiar grandeur to all the expressions of his indwelling spirit, and cause them to make a deeper impression on the imagination—and, like certain great paintings seen from afar, bring out in bolder relief from a few broad masses of light and shade, the distinctive features of his mind and character. That power of love, and holy trust, and entire self-surrender to God, which is at once the preservation and the consecration of humanity—is here presented, as on some conspicuous theatre, with loftier stature and sublimer mien and more wonderful accompaniments—the living poetry of man's spiritual vocation—fitted to impress the heart with a profounder seriousness and to kindle the imagination with holier visions of excellence. Great emergencies, indeed, do not often occur, and heroic efforts are not perpetually wanted in the course of man's earthly life; but the spirit that could meet the one, and sustain the other—the spirit that could furnish the hero, when he is demanded—should ever be in reserve, prompt and ready for action, in the depths of the human soul: and in the whole range of earth's traditions, no influence will be found so effectual to preserve and cherish it, as that image of gentle bravery and patient endurance and earnest faithfulness, which is drawn in the rich and unfading colours of the Gospel.

Men exact too much from Christianity, and make

too little profit of what it actually offers. It is not the discipline of our reason. Reason can take care of itself. What Christianity yields, is nurture for the affections and stimulus to the will; and this it gives through sympathy with the life of Christ—the only availing corrective of the selfishness which so deeply infects our world, and which reason too often does not check but rather justifies. The onward movement of the world is effected by a composition of forces; and Religion is one of them. A large spiritual impulse has been thrown into human affairs by Christianity; too large and too strong, it might seem, if the letter of its precepts were brought to bear in unqualified vigor on each particular case of human conduct—but not more than sufficient, if the number and stubbornness of the obstacles be taken into view, which its spirit has every where to overcome. The same Being who gave the impulse its strength, foresaw and calculated on the limitations that would practically restrain its energy. If the humility, the self-denial, the forgiveness of wrongs, the contempt of riches, the abstinence from all physical force, the renunciation of the world, inculcated by the Gospel—appear to some excessive and unreasonable, and opposed to the advance of civilisation—let it be recollected, that the inner principle out of which such tendencies emerge, exerts its force precisely in that direction, where in the actual condition of society, a strong counteraction is most needed. Reason is ever sufficiently prepared with its abatements and its qualifications. Lovingly and thoughtfully meditate the life of Christ; drink

its spirit into your inmost soul; and you will meet with no serious difficulty in its practical application. Paradoxical as it may seem to those who have not well considered the subject, it is the copious infusion of a rich poetic unction into the Gospel representations of faith and duty, which makes them practical and intelligible above all that was ever taught in the books of the philosophers. For poetry is a voice that issues from and finds its echo in the deep popular heart, where lies the source of all faith and of all enthusiasm for good. The speculation of the schools stands aloof from great popular sympathies, and plays off the dazzling coruscations of its cold and powerless light around the heads of the cultivated few; with how little direct effect on the popular morality and on popular progress, the history of philosophical opinion in all ages abundantly proves.

A divine element clearly manifests itself in all the purest and highest minds. It is the witness of their parentage. It is the omen of their destiny. What a sorrow comes over us, when they pass away from earth! We feel as though an influence had gone, which made the world more beautiful and blessed while it remained. How sacred is the poet's grave, sleeping in the quiet bosom of the green vale, beneath the shadow of the mighty hills, to the solemn music of the everlasting brooks, amidst which his pure spirit had held daily communings with God!—We feel holier as we bend over it and mourn. Of like nature, but deeper, holier still—is our emotion at the foot of the Cross of Christ. What a spirit, we reflect, was then eclipsed to this dark-

ened world! What a wisdom and a love then ceased to give their strength to human weakness, and shed their healing on human woe! His Gospel yet remains—embalming his words, and linking our hearts through ages in unbroken sympathy with his immortal spirit. When his life rises up before us from that beautiful record—so calm, so pure, so gentle, loving and holy—a spot of stainless light on the dark and turbid surface of the world's history—we feel what a divinity was in it; what a fitting mediator he was between this life of sin and woe and the blessed peace of heaven! We feel there is a consolation—an assurance—in Christ, which nothing purely of earth can give. Through him we are spiritually united with God. His life is the way by which we ascend to heaven. His spirit is the fount of living waters. He who drinks of them, shall never die.

VIII.

THE VEIL TAKEN FROM THE HEART.

2 Corinthians, iii. 15, 16.

"The veil is upon their heart."

"Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away."

It was a doctrine of the celebrated Origen and some other fathers of the ancient Alexandrine Church, that there are different senses in Scripture, one hidden beneath the other, which Christians successively penetrate into, as they advance in the spiritual life. In reference to Scripture, this doctrine is wholly untenable. Scripture in any one passage can have but a single sense—that which was present to the mind of its author when he wrote. In the several productions of which it consists, it is an expression of the thought of one conscious and reflecting human being. It is otherwise, however, in that grander Word, where the Infinite Mind has immediately written down his thoughts—that 'elder Scripture,' of which our Bible is but a partial transcript and conveys but a limited conception. Here we may proceed from height to height continually—one truth more comprehensive and sublime rising up behind another in endless succession. The mind

of man, as it grows, opens more and more into the interior workings of the mind of God. As one integument after another of sensual blindness is taken away, and the inner life of his immortal spirit comes more freely into operation, he acquires deeper insight and discerns great and unsuspected realities hidden under the surface of things. Through the dim veil of the visible and perishing, he catches a glimpse of the vast significance of the unseen and the eternal.

The natural man has a veil upon his heart. He sees what strikes the eye; he hears what enters the ear; and the impressions that act upon his senses, form as yet the only realities with which he is conversant. Only by degrees he turns his thoughts inward on himself, and acquires the ideas of truth, duty, mental dignity, God and divine things. His earliest language to express these higher conceptions, is borrowed from the world of sense. He can only speak intelligibly of them by figure and similitude. The wind, the stream, the tree, sunshine and darkness—help him to body forth and represent the invisible operations of the spirit. The seen becomes to him a dim mirror of the unseen. A secondary and far deeper sense slowly emerges to his view from beneath the grosser and more obvious meaning that lies on the broad face of the world. He learns at length, that man's whole wisdom is not exhausted in the doctrine—'let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die'—and gains a faint though ever-strengthening perception of the higher truth—'Man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceed-

eth out of the mouth of God.' Moral and religious ideas are now interwoven with his whole conception of the life of man. A sublimer thought enters into his interpretation of human action and suffering. As man walks the earth, a light is seen to pursue his footsteps and encompass his deeds, which discriminates them, as read in the moral sense of the universe, from the dark, ignominous destiny of the brute. Animal wants and impulses are still indeed in operation at the primitive groundwork of his being—but capable of transformation into affection and moral sentiment, by the higher ends to which they may be subordinated. The demands of hunger and thirst, for example, and of shelter from nature's inclemency, call into existence innumerable branches of useful industry, stimulate contrivance and forethought, awaken the love of property, and weave out of it those earliest social relations which give occasion to the virtues of reciprocal faithfulness and honesty. Again, the union of the sexes among human beings is something very different from the transient pairing of the feathered tribes. It is the symbol and outward expression of a holy, inward, and enduring love—the pledge of social order and harmony—consecrated by the highest sanctities, ennobled by the spirit of self-denial and responsibility, and embalmed in the richest essence of a divine affection. Society, in its wildest range, national and international—involves far higher elements than the gregarious instinct of brutes. It is the embodiment of a great moral idea. The most refined conceptions of man's intellect—law, right, freedom, the common

weal, human brotherhood—are its essential constituents, and stand forth with most distinct manifestation to the mental eye from which the veil of sensual barbarism has been taken away. In this stage of human development, life presents itself under the solemn aspect of duty. The idea of what ought to be, rises up from the bosom of what is, and interprets its confusion, and elevates man's earthly existence into a grand moral effort, which must be bravely and consistently maintained, though wealth and honour and fame should not attend it, and his best hope should perish with the extinction of his mortal breath. This is the *moral* sense of the great book of Providence —a sense far more exalted and beautiful than the sensual and the selfish, though we could not go beyond it—a sense in which many noble and earnest spirits have found contentment and inward dignity of soul, though they had no clear belief of an immortal inheritance. With simple and truthful hearts they turned to such light as was before them, and the carnal veil was removed. Amidst the tumult and disorder of human affairs, they traced the lineaments of a deeper harmony and a grander truth. They saw and reverenced the great moral significance of the life that now is, though unable to penetrate the mysterious darkness of the eternity which surrounds it.

But this is not the final rest of men's thoughts. From the moral, they pass on to the religious and spiritual meaning of life. Steady persistence in the path of duty, and habitual contemplation of the universe from the higher point of view which it

affords—gradually open the mind to the perception of yet sublimer truths. There is one position in existence, and perhaps only one—surveyed from which the widely-scattered and fragmentary indications of Divine purpose combine themselves into harmony, and disclose to us the commencement and rudimental tendencies of a grander order of things. It is the position in which we fix ourselves by resolute conformity to the dictates of conscience—when we look on life in the spirit of duty, and interpret its mysteries by the moral law within the breast. In this attitude, and with the spiritual eye sent out reverentially in this direction—the mind is prepared to accept and appropriate such further discoveries of divine truth, as may dawn on it in the fervid action of its own powers from within, or may be brought to it by the revelations of some more gifted spirit from without. For contact with a prophetic spirit —above all, with its perfection in a Christ, where the deepest faith in things unseen is interfused in living union with more than human love and spotless sanctity of life—excites and enkindles the latent elements of the immortal mind, and draws forth from the dim surmises and shadowy anticipations where but the germs of truth exist—the strengthening outline and deepening features in which truth itself ever becomes more distinctly visible. With open face we behold as in a mirror, the glory of that prophetic soul, and are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. This gradual transition, in man's mental progress towards higher views of life, is in accord-

ance with that general law of development which pervades the universe, and yields a strong presumption, that the later views, when they grow out of the earlier and harmonise with them—are an approximation to eternal truth. As the moral aspect of existence took its images and its illustrations from the world of the senses, and was rudely mirrored on the coarse expanse of outward things—so the heavenly finds its types and its intimations in the moral world, and rises up through it with a softer and serener beauty into the spiritual ken. Another veil is removed, new light is admitted to the stronger organ. The Spirit of the Lord has quickened the perceptions of the soul: and now—in duty, trial, sorrow and death—amid the questionings of reason, and the anguish of conscience, and the deep yearnings of affection—in that strange, mysterious play of light and shade which flits over the moral aspect of man's life—it reads a grander and more solemn purpose; it discerns the indication of higher ends; it traces the faint imagery of the calm, harmonious heaven, reflected from the dark and troubled waters of the world.

Of things invisible the evidence can never be such, as those who rely on purely intellectual assurance, will demand. It is to be found very much in the state of the believing mind—in the particular aspect from which the subject is contemplated. It never can be presented in a completely demonstrative form. The materials for a conclusion lie scattered round us far and wide on every hand. The attraction which gathers them into one view—the chain

of thought which binds them together in a continuous argument, and renders them the expression of a comprehensive truth—must come from the reflecting mind and be a transference to them of a portion of its own moral vitality. So true it is, in the highest of all senses, that the Kingdom of God must be found within us. It is the usual recompence of a calm, pure and devout soul, as it advances in years, to acquire clearer insight and deeper trust. It turns more and more to the great Lord of conscience and faith; and in the mirrored image of his divine life, beholds a type of its own. By the light of his Spirit this earthly existence is transformed and beautified. It is taken out of its forlorn isolation. Its manifold relations with things eternal and unseen become perceptible. It is seen as but the commencing term of an infinite progression. The barriers vanish, which seemed to shut it in; and infinity opens a sphere for its boundless course of future development.

When this spiritual conception of existence has once got firm possession of the mind, the Future offers perpetual compensations for all that is relinquished in the Past. As mortal life wears away, a deeper feeling grows up within us of the life that cannot perish. A veil is removed, and the spiritual vision discerns what was before invisible. To minds of a devout temper the eternal is mirrored in the temporal. It is in the celestial sense, that they read the varied page of life. The greatest and nearest of all realities is now placed, as it were, within their spiritual grasp. They rise no more darkly and

doubtingly from the seen to the unseen; but, reversing the previous order of thought, they bring down the light of the unseen on the seen—to clear away the mystery and dissolve the shadows of earth: —and they find the true significance of all present appearances and events in their relation to the grand catastrophe of the human drama which is to come on the scene, when death's dark curtain is updrawn.

Encompassed by a fading and dissolving world, and musing on its evanescent scenes in that spirit of holy trust which infuses the serene blessedness of a Christian life—we are then most conscious of the eternal interest that we have in God—the veil which ordinarily rests on human hearts, is then most completely removed, and a clear, unimpeded prospect lies before us into the spiritual world—when we turn our thoughts within, and compare those elements of our being which bear on them the deepest impress of durability, with the external shows of things—fluctuating, perishable and transitory—amidst which our diviner functions find the stimulus and occasion of their present exercise and discipline.

Our outward life flows on with ceaseless change in almost every element of which it is composed. Look back some twenty or five-and-twenty years—you that have already passed the meridian of your days. Contrast the circumstances which made your whole world of thought and action and endeavour then, with those in which you find yourselves now. You can hardly recognise the identity of your ex-

istence. You seem to have dropped into another planet, and to belong to a different order of being. Vast events, in that interval, have swept over the busy and crowded stage of human affairs, and given a new colour to the aspects of the time. Great questions are in an altered position. Opinions in every direction have made rapid progress. On many points you are yourself conscious, that you think and feel differently from what you then did. Old friends, too, are gone. Associates in earlier labours and interests are no more. The fire of youth is sensibly quenched in yourself and others. The snows of time are falling fast on your head. Hand and voice are feebler than they were. Younger and more energetic men are at your side, sharing with you more and more every day, the influence and activity with which once you filled almost alone the place assigned you by Providence.

Yes, life flows on unceasingly. Yet on its descending stream there still survive—a few high trusts—a few great principles—a few glorious truths —a few blessed remembrances—which change, calamity, bereavement cannot touch—amid which the soul of the virtuous sits calmly enthroned—and which go with him—an enduring and unassailable possession, on which the last enemy cannot lay his hand—through the dark and lonely chasm where life's waters precipitate themselves into eternity. Yes, life flows on ;—and the bright banks and the sunny fields and the joyous woods of youth, it leaves far, far behind—never to be trodden again : but a grander scenery now shuts it in, rich with the reflec-

tions of a manifold experience, and steeped in the softer and holier hues of a hope that beams more serenely beautiful with life's decline.

Life flows on:—and the fragments of many a broken plan and shattered hope and ruined ambition float beside us on its wave. Yet have we rescued some treasures from the wreck, and much abides with us that we can never lose. We have learned, that worldly success is not always the attendant of personal merit; that riches do not always bring happiness; nor elevated position, true dignity of soul: but that a peace, worth all the specious goods which this world has at its disposal, will ever be found in a simple and contented mind, in an affectionate heart, and in a pure and honourable life.—If this be all that we have learned, the world's great teachings will not have been wasted on us; and we shall take with us into eternity, the seeds of a nobler wisdom and the conditions of higher advancement.—Life flows on; and a new generation, strangers to us and to the remembrances that are dearest to our hearts—are gay and active on its banks. Amongst them are our children, and our children's children; and the sunshine of their bright and happy hours revives the memory of our own youth, and calls out again with its genial warmth, sympathies which had else lain cold and dead. Amidst them too, invisible to them, but clearly discernible by our spiritual eyesight—are shadowy forms of those long passed from earth, who once occupied the very ground where they are now revelling in the warm flush of joyous existence, and with us in by-gone days shared in the

same eager and exciting interests which now engross their souls.

There is something wonderful in this unchangeable stability and tenderness of human affection. Years have no power over it; nay, cause it rather to strike a deeper root, and to put forth fresh blossoms on the bough that is grey with age. It is the experience of most as they advance in life, that the scenes and companions of early years acquire new vividness in the memory, and a stronger hold on the heart. When we draw nigh to the dim threshold of the eternal scene, and a solemn shade overcasts all the nearer realities of earth—the images of life's morning come forth with renovated clearness from the faded past, and cluster round us again: as if to show, they had a lasting place in our souls, and were to usher us with their friendly companionship into that unknown world of which Death is the mysterious gate. A breath as from childhood passes over the spirit, and transports it once more into the scenery and influences of its first home. There is the dear, familiar abode, distinctly visible to memory's eye, where life's fresh joys and earliest sorrows were known—each nook and passage, the very pictures on the walls, and the old-fashioned furniture—all, tell-tales of a thousand little histories —just as they stood a generation ago, as though time had touched them not:—there is the garden, as it was when our childish hands cultivated the flower-pot, and plucked the fruit from the bush:—there are the fields and the woods, fresh and sweet as they were, when we rambled through them, re-

sponsive in the careless gladness of our hearts to the voice of Spring:—and there—amongst them still—are the human forms which give them a deeper interest and a tenderer charm. Yea, the one dear and venerated friend, to whom life perhaps owes its happiest influence and most enduring impression of all that is good—whose death is separated from us by half a century—whose cherished words have slept within the soul, not forgotten, though unuttered to the world, amidst a crowd of later cares and and subsequent affections—comes back to us again with a new life from that distant day in the silent vigils of memory—as if to remind us, that he is now the sharer of a higher being—to claim from us on the verge of life, our whole debt of unextinguished affection—and to soften our departure from those we must shortly leave, by the welcome of one whom we long to behold again.

To one who recognizes in the indestructible instincts of man's soul, the living root of religious truth, there is something of far weightier import than an amiable sentimentality, in this revival towards the close of life of its earliest recollections. For these are phenomena which constantly mark the last stages of the soul's earthly existence; and whatever attempts may be made to explain them from physical causes—if surveyed in the broad lights of a comprehensive religious philosophy, they seem replete with moral significance. That the best impressions of our human experience—the images of our happiest and most innocent hours, and the memories of those most justly venerable

and dear—should throng around us with a new vitality as life's evening draws on, and cast their quiet and gentle light on the impending shade of death—is scarcely reconcilable with the supposition, that the spirit of which such remembrances are the most precious possession, is itself on the point of expiring forever. And O, my friends, if this sustaining faith, which we shall all need when a few more years have passed away—which even now we need continually, when an invisible hand plucks from the coronal of our domestic happiness, the choicest flowers of which it is woven—if this blessed and glorious faith is the fruit and recompense, not of metaphysical acuteness or dogmatic orthodoxy, but of a pure, humble, gentle and devout heart, filled with the spirit and aspiring after the life of Christ—let us cast out from our hearts and our homes, all that is sensual, selfish, unloving, worldly and base, and cherish one another, while we dwell together here, with holy affection, as members of the immortal family of God:—that, when Death steps into the midst of us, it may be, not to wrap our being in a deeper gloom, but to take the last veil from our hearts, and open our inward vision to the light of other worlds; that in our closing hours, we may become more distinctly conscious of the invisible presence that surrounds us, and behold the forms of the departed looking upon us as of yore with eyes of unaltered love, and hear the sweet tones of their well-known voice, as they bid us welcome to another home, and take us with them to the endless peace of our Father's house.

IX.

THE COINCIDENCE OF GENERAL AND SPECIAL PROVIDENCE.

ROMANS, xi. 36.

"Of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to Him be glory for ever."

THE rapid intuitions of religious fervour sometimes explore the depths of the spiritual world more searchingly than the keenest elaborations of logical subtlety. The soul's eye quickened by faith, pierces with a momentary glance through mysteries which repel the scrutiny of science. How exhaustive is this brief aphorism of the apostle, summing up in the sharply contrasted force of three prepositions, the whole doctrine of Providence! '*Of* Him, *through* Him, *to* Him, are all things.' God is the primal source of being, its living agency, and its final issue. His incomprehensible essence enfolds the universe—originating, pervading and completing all things. What can Philosophy add from all her treasures to this glorious utterance of the heart's wisdom? Yet into what an abyss of thought does it plunge us! We tremble with awe as we look down into it. We feel as if brought within the shadow of a truth, which has its roots in the impenetrable secrets of inmost being, and shoots up into

heights where man's intellect cannot follow it. To embrace that truth in all its amplitude, is possible only to the Infinite Mind. It is enough for us, if we can understand so much of it, as is practically applicable to ourselves;—if, amidst the vast umbrageous wilderness which stretches round us into boundless depths on every side, we can discern the friendly bough which shelters our mortal lot, laden with fruits of richest solace and heavenly strength for the sustenance of our immortal souls.

It is singular, that the earliest speculations of mankind should often have anticipated the profoundest questions of a later philosophy. There seems wrapped up in the human soul a latent divination of the highest truths. When it first awakens from the trance of barbarism, it sketches a loose, irregular outline of them on the dim blank of the Infinite, which the repeated essays of subsequent generations have done little more than attempt to correct and define and fill up. It is humbling to reflect, on how few topics in speculative philosophy, we have made any considerable advance beyond the mere surmises of our forefathers. On the other hand, in the vague prescience which enlightened the intellectual infancy of our race, we have a consolatory indication of the soul's affinity with the Spirit which governs all things, and of the changeless unity of aim which pervades its aspirations and rules its destiny. The very perturbations of its course, watched and computed from age to age, compensate each other, and yield the pure curve of

unerring direction, in which the Creator projected it, to move for ever.

The doctrine of Providence is one of the darkest and most difficult problems on which the human intellect has been exercised; yet it is one which men have loved to discuss from the remotest times. On few subjects has speculation been wilder or more conflicting. The superior wisdom of the present day consists in the better knowledge derived from experience, of the limits of our faculties: and the Gospel which puts the grounds of faith within ourselves, has disclosed in the reflected light of Christ's own life, the few unquestionable facts of our inner consciousness which are the basis of all Religion. Of such facts we must ever keep firm hold, in venturing forth to any distance from the shore, on that outlying, boundless sea of speculation where thousands of rash, presumptuous spirits have foundered and been lost. There was a deep wisdom in the governing maxim of the old Catholic Church—though often, it must be confessed, meagerly understood and falsely applied—that truth is to be found in a central point equally remote from divergent errors. The conditions of health are then most clearly perceived, when they have been compared with the irregular workings of disease. Let us apply this principle to the question before us.

We must look for the true doctrine of Providence, in the mean between fatalism which annihilates human free-agency in the overwhelming sovereignty of God—and that opposite theory of the universe, which leaves man to pick his way and secure his

well-being, by a light within himself for which he cannot account, amidst agencies originating he knows not how, and working with tendencies whose final issue he cannot divine. The fanatical Theist loses all sense of law and of rational self-subjection to its requirements, in helpless prostration before the irresistible omnipotence of arbitrary Will. The cold-blooded Atheist discerns law, and sees how he must act in relation to it: but he does not feel what law implies, and conceives no trust and experiences no joy from relying on it and co-operating with it. In both forms of error we recognise the uncontrolled and exaggerated operation of tendencies which are alike rooted in the necessary constituents of man's nature—which are needed to check and balance each other—and which harmoniously combined would issue in the proper belief of a Providence.

Divines make a distinction between the doctrines of a general and a special Providence. The former recognises an intelligent Author and Governor of the universe, and supposes Him to have constructed it at first on principles so perfectly wise and good, that they suffice of themselves to its orderly maintenance and development, without any occasion for special interpositions. The very admission indeed of such a necessity would imply a want of completeness in the original construction. But this view apparently so honourable to the Deity, excludes Him from all direct and constant intercourse with his creatures, and renders Him of little present interest to them. The laws and tendencies which He is supposed to have impressed on matter at the beginning of all

things, intervene rather as a barrier than a communication between Him and them; for having once set them in action, it is thought more consistent with his majesty, that He should henceforth cease from having any immediate share in the conduct of the universe. Man is placed in the midst of the divine works, to study and learn to execute the purpose indicated by them,—and to penetrate by reason through the interposed medium of second causes to the great remote First Cause, who dwells outside of creation, surveying it with a benevolent self-complacency, but admitting no human soul into his living presence. This may be described as the mechanical theory of Providence—the last and most refined expression of that anthropomorphic feeling—that interpretation of the ways of God from the works of man—which has so deeply imprinted itself on the successive phases of theological opinion. It has been a favourite theory with many philosophical Theists. We discern traces of its influence in Pope's Universal Prayer and Essay on Man. It was widely current, with divers modifications, among the Deists and Free-thinkers of the last century—that numerous class, who renouncing all belief in positive revelation, still retained their faith in a Supreme Mind and a moral government. It was a view well suited to men, in whom intellect was more strongly developed than feeling—whose studies had made them familiar with the uniform and unfailing operation of law in the divine economy of the world, but who could ill appreciate those fervent demands for a more intimate communion with God, which spring up irre-

pressibly in all devotional temperaments. It is not an atheistical view, but it involves an atheistical tendency; because it renders the belief in a God, simply an intellectual, not a moral, necessity to the human soul. When God ceases to be a daily need for our spiritual strength and refreshment, there is a disposition to dispense with Him as a superfluous hypothesis, and to acquiesce in the ultimate sufficiency of law considered in itself.

Such a view could not suffice for men of a different cast of mind—in fact, never has sufficed for the majority of religious persons in any age. Unacquainted with philosophical theories of the universe, and having little or no knowledge of any but the simplest and most obvious laws of nature—such persons admit unquestioned the traditional belief of their forefathers into warm and susceptible souls—and find in their reliance on the omnipresent agency of God, as the power which directs all their steps, and orders every event with a view to their spiritual discipline—the one great idea ever at hand, to solve life's mysteries and yield them patience and trust under its trials. These are the believers in a special Providence: and the followers of all the great popular monotheisms—Jews, Mohammedans and Christians—so long as they have been satisfied with the simple doctrines of their primitive belief, and have not ventured on philosophical refinements, have ever clung with remarkable tenacity to such views and almost looked on the retention of them as the test of a genuine faith.

The former class apprehend God by their under-

standings, searching Him through the depths and intricacies of his visible works. Law conceived in its abstractest form, is the grand intellectual scale by which they ascend to the heights of Deity, where the object of their worship sits distant and awful on the silent throne of the universe, and casts from afar the shadow of a cold reverence on their hearts. The latter are persons of lively faith and quick sensibilities, who feel God as a living presence in their inmost hearts, to comfort and counsel them amidst the world's daily toils and temptations. Their ardent devotion springs over the intervening agency of law, and mounts at once to God as the one great reality of existence—the immediate Dispenser and unerring Conductor of every influence which mingles in their varied flow of being. Life wears to them the one plain and simple aspect of a preparation for the judgment-seat of God. Ignorant of the grander and more general laws which embrace their humble lot, and send into it the impulses that shape its course, they only see in its changes direct workings of the hand of God. Every blessing that crowns their faithful labours, they accept as God's immediate answer to their prayers. Every trial which they have been spared, and every snare out of which they have been delivered, reveals to them a clear case of Divine interposition in their favour. In the sorrows which have humbled and sobered their hearts, when pride and exultation were becoming too strong—they recognise the chastisements which the vigilance of a Father's love saw they needed, and which He specially appointed for their correction. With the

one class, every thing is law, operating uniformly and necessarily. With the other, every thing depends on the immediate determinations of the Divine Mind, influenced by the moral deserts of his creatures. Such is the broad distinction between the doctrines of a general and a special providence. It indicates tendencies which have each their fitting place in the human mind, but yielded to implicitly and followed into their logical results independently of one another, terminate in the extreme conclusions already noticed of fatalism and atheism—in the former case, will annihilating law, in the latter, law annihilating will.

It remains to be shown, what is the element of truth involved in each of these theories. For in every form of opinion that has exercised an extensive sway amongst mankind, there is always some truth; not indeed the whole truth, but at least a side of it perceptible to those who put themselves in the right point of view for apprehending it, and which only becomes error by isolation from other truths that should furnish the needful qualification. There is a sense in which the philosophical doctrine of Providence is true. All outward events and phenomena are embraced under the stern and irreversible dominion of law. Apparent exceptions disappear when more thoroughly examined. Science is a perpetual revelation of law. The universe is a compound of laws, one working under and within another—the most minute and special embraced in the more general, and issuing from their combination. Even effects that depend on human volition—

such as particular acts, dispositions and occupations—are shown by the results of statistical inquiry, to stand in a certain uniform relation to external circumstances, and to come so nearly within the limits of law as to be almost susceptible in general terms of prediction. We may affirm, then, with the philosophic theist, that God manifests Himself only through law; that law is his uniform mode of agency; that we can know Him through nature in no other way; and that consequently, the more we know of the laws of nature, the more we know, in this outward sense, of God.

But there is another way of becoming acquainted with God—the way of spiritual experience, opened to us in our souls. Through this medium God exercises his Providence in a different manner from his government of the material world. Here also it is true, that analogy and a perception of consequences forbid us to assume, that God acts without law, and that his intercourse with intelligent and sympathising natures, is in any degree subject to caprice or arbitrary determination. But the laws which govern the spiritual world, lie deeper and are less apprehensible by us; they have a wider and subtler ramification of influence; they depend on conditions peculiar to the region of mind. We here approach those 'dim-discovered tracts' of being—the border-land, as it were, of the finite and the Infinite—where our instruments of observation fail us, and our mental vision is lost and confounded in depths and altitudes of thought for which we can find no measures of comparison. A few points

alone are definitely fixed, to guide us as far as we can go. We must not violate the first principles of eternal reason: we must not disregard those instinctive promptings of our spiritual nature, which are as much fundamental realities of our being, and as essential conditions of all truth, as the principles of reason itself: and in our earnest efforts to find out God and understand his ways, we must admit no view inconsistent with the highest notion that we can form of a perfect Spirit. Within such limits we are to seek the great truth of a Divine Providence.

It is the first intuition of Religion—confirmed by Christianity, whose vital dogmas breathe its concentrated essence—that through the soul we have direct access to God, and by a trustful heart and a submitted will and a devoted service, may spiritually unite ourselves with Him. The precise relation indeed of man's will and agency to the Divine, is one of those mysteries which God has reserved to Himself. We gaze upon it with solemn awe, and pass on; for it is inexplicable. All attempts to fathom it, involve the contradictions which rush in on the bewildered understanding, as soon as the finite seeks to grasp the Infinite. Let us be content to recognise—as landmarks in the illimitable field that spreads before us—one or two unquestionable facts that are clearly attested by the inner consciousness and verified by reflection, without presuming to determine the logical connexion between them, or lapsing into sceptical despair because we cannot trace it.—We know from the sure witness

within, that we *have* a power of voluntarily doing, or forbearing to do, that which presents itself to us under the circumstances in which we are placed, as morally right or morally wrong—in a religious sense, of allying ourselves with, or opposing ourselves to, the spiritual agency in which we revere the sovereign legislation of the Universe. That such acts are properly *our own*—that in performing them, we are something more than passive instruments mechanically set in action by a higher power—is proved to all men practically, beyond the possibility of dispute, by the effects of that inward reaction which produces self-approval in the one case, and self-condemnation or remorse in the other. Here, then, we have one great spiritual fact established—that of individual responsibility. Again, from reason we are equally sure, that the results of our choice, whether it has been for or against the moral law—when they fall out of our minds into the vast tide of events which is rolling round us and sweeping past us in the external world, will be taken up by the great restorative processes of universal law, and wrought out by the Supreme Wisdom, from whatever moral influence they originally proceeded, into the unfailing issues of ultimate justice and mercy. Here we recognise another fact, which reason equally forbids us to question—the absolute sovereignty of God. On these two facts—incapable of perfect reconcilement in our limited view, yet each resting on unanswerable evidence of its own—is suspended the great problem of Divine Providence.

The vital point in the question immediately in-

teresting us now—is this :—the power of voluntary approximation to God or voluntary recession from Him, which consciousness testifies we all possess—introduces a new element into the conception of Divine law, which meets the demands of many a devout soul for the consolations of a special Providence. The precise distinction between matter and mind, it may not be possible for us to explain ; but this we can see—that they present a different subject to the action of God's Spirit ; and that the Divine agency, though pervading the external as well as the mental world, and operating in both under the guidance of wise and benignant law, sustains from the very nature of spirit, a more intimate relation to the latter than to the former, and in its effects upon it, must be modified by the moral condition of the recipient mind. There may be, therefore, from the mysterious correlation between the Divine and the human spirit involved in the fact of man's free agency—a special adaptation of Divine influences to the moral requirements of each individual case, without its being necessary to suppose, that God ever acts arbitrarily, or otherwise than in strict accordance with uniform law. He may treat man in every instance, as man by his own deliberate effort or culpable negligence, has put himself in a condition to be treated : and thus there is a sense in which it may be philosophically true, that God exercises a special providence, every moment that we breathe, over the lives of all of us.

A few obvious illustrations will render this statement more clear. The cases in which the doctrines

of a general and a special Providence are usually deemed most at variance, and the latter is charged by the former with presumption and inconsistency —are the following: (1.) prayers for help and deliverance; (2.) intercession for others; (3.) expectation of immediate peace and joy from repentance and conversion. On all these cases I may remark generally at the outset—that the sure effect of an earnest self-surrender to God, is an accession of strength and insight to all the moral and spiritual faculties. New life flows down from the Parent Mind into the soul that seeks communion with Him in filial trust and devotedness—and gives it light to see its way through the darkest scenes, and a strength not of this world for the performance of the hardest service. Our moral relations to the universe are revealed to us in the light of God's Spirit. We comprehend the requirements of duty by the simple wisdom of the heart. It is the right appreciation of these moral relations, and the faithful performance of duties growing out of them, that constitute the worth and dignity of man as man. We may want a scientific view of the world; we may even be ignorant of some of the most important physical laws: and yet with a simple, earnest, pious heart, singly intent on good, we shall see what we ought to do in the narrow sphere of responsibility assigned us, and do it well. For light is ever proportionate to responsibility. Scientific mistakes, if such we incur, will be overruled by moral earnestness, to far higher good in the final result, than if with more scientific illumination, we had possessed less spirituality of

mind and integrity of heart. Such conclusions, which find a verification in our daily experience, will suggest the means of reconciling a special with a general Providence.

A good and pious man, in the fulness of his undoubting faith, prays to God for deliverence from the straits of adversity, and implores a blessing on the fruits of his labours. 'Help yourself,' says the scornful philosopher—'and do not weary Heaven with your unavailing prayers. The means are in your own hand. Use them; and the effect will follow.' True it will follow; but its productiveness must be in proportion to the energy of the will which prompts it, and the clear foresight which guides it to its destined end. Such is the union and sympathy of the mental with the material world, that a divine influence streams out from one upon the other, and floods it with a superhuman energy. Men become new creatures, when they work in conscious harmony with God. They detect the secrets of the omnipresent Spirit, and lay hold of its hidden springs. An inspiration comes over them, whose marvellous effects transcend the dull mechanism of worldly routine and frustrate the selfish calculations of worldly prudence. History abounds with records of the calm success of men who have lived in the spirit of prayer and the power of faith, and sought no other wisdom than what they found in the promptings of an honest and religious heart.

The case of intercession is attended with more difficulty. Logic forsakes us here. We must look for a reason in the religious impulses of our na-

ture. We are urged to intercession by feelings which we cannot resist. When you part with a daughter to find her future home among strangers in a distant land, or commit a son for the first time, young and inexperienced, to the snares and seductions of the great world—can you repress a prayer to Heaven for their preservation from the sorrows and perils with which life abounds? No, it goes up to God involuntarily. It escapes from your lips before you are aware. You could not check it, even if you knew it was sinful. Nature here is mightier than reason, and will have her way. And shall we charge the God who made the heart, with subjecting it to baseless illusions, because we cannot understand the mode in which its holiest petitions will be answered? We know not the endless connexions and hidden sympathies that pervade the spiritual world, and influence its course. When Nature's pleading is so universal and so strong, it is sufficient to see, that it involves nothing impossible or absurd. There is oftentimes a faith higher than reason, on which the devout heart may well repose. A pure, unselfish, affectionate and trustful soul, responsive to the Spirit that watches over all things, and shedding the fulness of its tenderest solicitudes on the sympathy of the Infinite Heart—may be prolific of good to an extent that we cannot measure, and the condition of effects throughout the system of Providence, which it is not for us to attempt to trace. Influences too, within our comprehension, may obviously confer a preservative force on intercessory prayer. How often may vigilance quickened by devotion, and

thoughtfulness that has gained deeper insight by communion with God, anticipate evils and avert dangers which an irreligious spirit in its blind apathy would have overlooked, or allowed to pass uncorrected! How touching and solemn is the reflection, that those whom we love best on earth, and by whom we are most purely and tenderly beloved—a sister's gentle spirit or a mother's full heart—never address themselves to God without a word of holy supplication on our behalf! The hour of prayer, when the mind gathers up its thoughts from the distractions of the day, and weary with the toils of life, craves an interval of rest—is a hallowed and blessed time. Distant souls meet then in the presence of God, and exchange a silent sympathy which strengthens their mutual affection, and makes them unseen a check on each other's faithfulness and purity.*

The promise of immediate blessing to the converted sinner, is alleged by the philosopher as another instance of contrariety between the doctrines of a special and a general Providence: and the very possibility of such a sudden change of condition is denied, as inconsistent with the fixed and uniform laws by which God administers his moral govern-

* '—The course of prayer who knows?
It springs in silence where it will,
Springs out of sight, and flows
At first a lonely rill:

But streams shall meet it by and by,
From thousand sympathetic hearts,
Together swelling high
Their chant of many parts.'
Christian Year. Monday in Easter Week.

ment. Scripture is quoted as at variance with itself on this subject. 'God,' says Moses, 'will visit the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Him.' 'Go in peace,' says Christ to the sinner, 'thy faith hath saved thee.' The Law prolongs the penalty to children's children: the Gospel, on repentance, cuts it off in the life of the offender himself. How can both these statements represent a truth, and be received as the word of God? Both are, however, true from their own point of view. The difference is that of the dispensations to which they respectively belong—one affecting the outward life—the other, the interior condition of the soul. The laws of health and social relation, which sin has violated, will hold on their course and bear their penal fruits, often through more than one generation; and the inevitable working of these laws should be deeply impressed on all men's minds, and set forth with distinct and emphatic warning in every system of education. For it is a terrible truth, that repentance, however profound and durable, is many times without avail to restore vigour to a debilitated constitution, to recruit the fortunes that have been prodigally wasted, or to avert from guiltless children, the consequences of parental folly and crime. Yet it is also true, that the law of mind is mightier than all outward laws; and the Gospel justifies its promise by calling that law of mind into the fullest operation. Repentance, indeed, cannot at once re-establish health, or bring back an estate, or put a family in the same advantageous circumstances in

regard to this world, as they might else have enjoyed; and to those who see all things in the light of this world, so remediless an alternative may appear pure and unmixed evil. But when the heavenly call has been heard and obeyed, and faith has purged the inner vision of the soul, and will, quickened by a spirit from above, has resolutely subjected itself to God's law, and duty and the eternal life have become the great realities of existence—then the heritage of penal suffering, without ceasing outwardly to be such, is transformed by an energy which goes forth from the mind itself, into a source of spiritual blessing. To the converted sinner, and to all who are connected with him, it is made a holy and purifying discipline—a stimulus to moral progress and an instrument of moral power—fraught with trials and difficulties which, under the corrective influence of a religious spirit, form the soul to a true virtue, and teach it meekness and patience and self-denial and devout trust, and breathe into it the tender and sympathising humanity which thousands in the fulness of an outward prosperity are not aware that they want. Evil in its external aspects is unchanged; but to the soul its spiritual relation is reversed. Thus God keeps his word under both his covenants. In the life of a true penitent, the fruits of past wickedness, severed from the stock which nourished them, lose their noxious quality, and even fatten the soil for the future harvests of good.

The special Providence of God operates on the will, conscience, and affection of individual man. These will be refractory, dull and cold, or prompt,

vigilant and full of fervour—converting God's outward visitations into curses or blessings, as the soul turns itself away from God and repels the infusions of his Spirit, or as it seeks Him in the holy earnestness of prayer and cherishes its inner life in the bosom of his love. The might of a religious spirit over the things of this world, is wonderful. There are seasons when its influence atones for the natural weakness of reason, and replaces all the deficiencies of knowledge. Nor must this view be considered as any argument against the importance of an increased acquaintance with science. It simply affirms, that in the unavoidable absence of science, the moral purposes of life may be fully accomplished; inasmuch as there is a substitute for it in the religious nature of man, which abundantly suffices, under every degree of intellectual light, for his safe and happy guidance. A mind truly devout, as soon as it is conscious of ignorance, will seek to dispel it. To do right according to present knowledge, is man's first duty; to extend his means of doing it, by more knowledge and wider views of truth, is his second. Whatever a conscientious man perceives to be a law in the government of God's world, he will hold himself bound to obey: and if his piety keep pace with his science—if his affections are not chilled by doubt, but interpose their warm and genial hues as a tempering medium to the clear, cold light that streams in upon his intellect—he will grow day by day into the conviction, that every act he performs, every truth he gains, every sentiment he cultivates, every aspiration he indulges, in conscious harmony

with the eternal laws of the universe—is but another link to bind his nature in a living bond with God. Step by step he will more fully reconcile the demands of faith and reason; and in his ever-widening view the doctrines of a general and a special Providence will be seen finally to coalesce in one.

X.

THE TRUE EXPRESSION OF HUMAN BROTHERHOOD.

MATTHEW, xxiii. 8.
"All ye are brethren."

THERE are some emotions which thrill to the very depths of the soul. Of such is the consciousness of human brotherhood. For power over all the springs of holy tenderness, it comes next to the consciousness of God. Moments occur in the lives of all of us, when we feel, that there is a closer and more enduring tie between men, than is indicated by the outward relationship of birth and social position—a spiritual bond that grows out of the sympathies of the immortal mind, and cannot be touched by the casualties of outward things. The greatest minds are most alive to this solemn consciousness. The passages in the poets which we remember to have most deeply moved us, are such as called it forth in its utmost strength. There is a common heart in humanity, and the tears start unbidden to our eyes, when the sad or joyous realities are vividly presented to us, which are the common inheritance of our race. When great principles have made their way in the world, and are advancing towards universal acknowledgment, they are caught up by the

popular sentiment, and not rarely disfigured and exaggerated by undiscriminating fanaticism. There may be, and there actually is, such a thing as the cant of human brotherhood. To understand its claims and feel its blessing, it is important to show, what it is not, and what is sometimes put forth in place of it.

The spirit of human brotherhood is not, then, the same thing as the spirit of mere democracy. Doubtless there often has been a true heart of humanity in strong democratic movements; but sometimes also they have only disguised the efforts of selfishness and a vulgar ambition. Human brotherhood not only does not demand an equalization of the external condition of mankind, but is even incompatible with it. Dependence and authority are a consequence of the different relations which the course of events or original diversities of power and intelligence inevitably establish among men. Society is the sum total of these relations: and in the due adjustment of them, the realization of human brotherhood consists. It may be remarked of all attempts to efface these inequalities of condition, that they can never succeed, inasmuch as they thwart the great law of the Divine government, which is unity in the midst of diversity;—and further, that they lay the stress of philanthropy in the wrong place—on the merely outward in the human lot, which it is impossible for laws to fix in a particular type—to the neglect of the inward life, where a true equality—an equality of worth and happiness—can alone be found. This observation does

not, of course, extend to the maintenance of any distinctions among men that are exclusive and unjust,—or of unequal and oppressive government of any kind. All such evils demand and justify resistance, till they are removed. Often it is the natural re-action against their long endurance, which impels men in the first frenzy of a new liberty, to aim at forcibly introducing a superficial and external equality, destructive of that deeper equality felt in the heart, through which alone they become truly conscious of a common brotherhood.

The spirit of human brotherhood is not promoted by artificially breaking down those lines of natural separation in the intercourse of different classes, which result inevitably from congeniality of pursuits and interests, from correspondence in social position, and from harmony in manners, tastes and sentiments. The folly here is in meddling with the spontaneous operations of nature. Left to themselves, the different elements of society fall easily into their proper places, and assume their natural functions, and work peacefully together without any collision—each man happy in habitual association with those, whom education and circumstances have fitted him most readily to sympathise with, and enable him best to understand. Nor does this view of society justify a spirit of pride and exclusiveness. On the contrary, it is the vicious predominance of such qualities which produces an inordinate tendency in the opposite direction. It is the presumptuous attempt of cold and haughty natures to throw up an artificial barrier between the social grades,

which disinclines men to recognise the natural one. Nothing forced and artificial ever succeeds. There is an obvious feeling of propriety in these matters, which a genuine humanity will be content to follow. And indeed the truly sympathetic and actively benevolent rarely overlook it or protest against it. Complaint usually comes from the restless and the vain—impatient of the barriers which confine their ambition, and hankering for sudden distinction. Is there a more valuable class in society than our domestic servants? Who have such an influence on our daily comfort and happiness? Who have so strong claim on our sympathy? Whom are we more bound to treat with habitual consideration and courtesy? Yet it is quite clear, that we should in nowise increase their happiness or our own, if we were to break through the conventional rules of decorum, which long experience has ratified, and familiarly were to replace the old usage of respectful reserve and friendly regard—if they, for instance, were to sit down at table with us, and take a part in the conversation of our friends, or we as unreasonably and improperly were to obtrude ourselves on their intervals of leisure, and join the circle of their personal acquaintance. This is an extreme case, but it tests the principle. Try it in another way. Consider the relations of the middle class to the aristocracy. We should feel it very unbecoming and very foolish, to claim admission on terms of perfect freedom and familiarity into the society of those, whose station and mode of life, whose habits and ideas, are so widely different from our own:

and we should certainly resist, as an intolerable impertinence, any attempt on their part to intrude on our privacy, to disturb our natural affinities, and interrupt our chosen intercourse. Each class best works out its own objects independently, within the limits which the constructive organism of Society has thrown around it, for the protection of its specific agency.

These remarks apply to constant familiar intercourse. There are occasions of a more public nature, religious and philanthropic—seasons of national rejoicing or periodical festivity—when it is much to be wished, that all classes would lay aside their habitual reserve, and mingle kindly and cordially with each other. But there are manifestations among us, of a tendency to go far beyond this point, and to level every where all social distinctions, as an infringement on the natural rights of man. Whether the prevalence of such a spirit be really conducive to feelings of mutual respect and brotherly love between different classes, is more than doubtful. Its action wants calmness. Its obvious sources infuse into it elements of unhealthy excitability. It is produced partly by intense disgust at the cold and haughty reserve which still too strongly marks the demeanour of the upper ranks—partly by the hasty generalisations to which first impressions of truth naturally lead among the imperfectly educated—and partly by that mixed feeling of philanthropy and piety which adopts the doctrines and usages of the first Christians, as they are literally set forth in the New Testament, without due considera-

tion of the conditions under which Providence has taught us, they are to be applied to the present circumstances of mankind.

The spirit of human brotherhood does not show itself in claiming absolutely for every individual of every class, a direct share in the political affairs of his country. This may or may not, according to circumstances, become a condition of the general welfare. But much declamation wholly beside the purpose, is sometimes vented on this subject by persons who would fain have themselves considered as the exclusive friends of the people. No rule of universal application can be laid down. No abstract right can be affirmed. No man can claim that as a right, which it might be shown would tend, if put indiscriminately into practice, to endanger or impede the steady progress of society, and consequently to defeat the ultimate interest of every class in the state. Rights are not a constant quantity in the vast computation of human interests, but grow with an uniform increment in proportion to man's capacity of comprehending and fulfilling the duties that are co-ordinate with them. The sole object of importance is, the moral development of society;—that each class and interest composing it, should be so effectually protected and represented, as to secure just and impartial government for all—no burden unfairly laid—no privileges exclusively conferred—no monopolies of social advantage and distinction permitted to subsist, which keep down any class, and prevent its members from attaining the consideration and influence to which virtue and talent

would else entitle them. The present is not a fitting occasion to inquire, what may be the best means, under the actual circumstances of society, for accomplishing this object. Our business here is with humanity and religion, not with politics. But it should never be forgotten, that the minority of a community have rights to be protected, as well as the majority. The one end of social endeavour should be the attainment of strict justice and equal law, with free scope to industrial and mental development —for all. This is the end, the only end worth a serious thought: and there is no true humanity, no genuine sympathy with man as man, in so working on the feelings of the multitude, as to blind them to a perception of the end, in a fanatical enthusiasm about some one of the possible means of reaching it.

Lastly, human brotherhood does not consist in patronising the poor. There is something intolerably offensive in this spirit of affected condescension. Our modern philanthropy is not without occasional specimens of it. The philosophical coldness that keeps aloof from all popular movements, yet honours the abstract ideal of humanity, devoutly dwelt upon in the visions of studious contemplation—is infinitely more respectable and far more deserving of trust. The cant of humanity always betrays an inward hollowness and lack of heart. Men pretend an interest which they do not really feel, and put on an air of familiarity which ill disguises the spirit of aristocratical insolence harbouring in the breast. They think how kind and good it is, with their refined manners and cultivated minds to step down from

their elevated position, and mingle thus freely and easily in a crowd of ignorant and unpolished men. They are profoundly conscious of what they are doing. Self is predominant over humanity. They fancy all eyes must be upon them—filled with admiration at such unheard of self-sacrifice and condescension. They never dream, that there may be far truer and nobler men in the multitude which they so obligingly patronise. You may sometimes hear such persons at public meetings employing language —solely for the sake of a moment's popularity— which they do not and cannot mean with any approach to literal truth, and which they would think it very hard, if they were tied down to carry out consequentially into the whole of its legitimate applications. To take them at their word, you would suppose they believed that only one class in society, and that the lowest, was entitled to consideration— and that to it the time and energy and resources of all other classes should be exclusively sacrificed. They affect a contempt for the outward advantages of their own condition. They disown the society in which they habitually move. They profess, they have no interest and sympathy except for the poor.

Now, this exaggerated insincerity vitiates all healthy influence over the popular mind at its source. Every poor man of plain and unperverted understanding sees through such false patronage and hypocritical flattery at once. He knows that this is not the language of nature and truth. He puts himself in the place of the speaker, and perceives that it cannot spring from genuine conviction. He

feels his reason and his heart alike insulted by a challenge to the confidence of his own class, founded on the refusal of sympathy to every other class. He asks, why the honourable merchant, the benevolent country-gentleman, the upright and patriotic peer, are to be shut out from his good wishes and kindly feeling, simply because the same accident of fortune which made him poor, has invested them with riches or rank. A better sentiment fills his breast, in the remembrance, that they are all men like himself. He feels, therefore, that the speaker has not hit the living point of the matter;—that he has come down with contempt ill-concealed, to cajole and mislead those who in outward condition are below him, instead of putting forth a brother's sympathy and a brother's effort to lift them up into the full consciousness of inward equality with himself. It is the foulest wrong that can be inflicted on the humbler classes, to lower their standard of morals, sentiment, cultivation and manners, or in any degree diminish their respect for the external decencies and refinements of life.—Their improvement is only to be effected, by stimulating them to aspire after a higher condition, and telling them plainly, that they must themselves be the authors of their own respectability. A firm and honest adherence to this rule of action, even if it compels the occasional utterance of harsh and unpalatable truths, is the test of a genuine philanthropy: and he who steadily abides by it through good and through evil report, will command in the final result the deepest respect and trust and the largest influence for good, even among

those whose short-sighted views and hasty impulses he may at times have found it necessary to oppose.

Of kindred nature with the patronising spirit just described, is the obtrusive violation of the poor man's home by the insolent fanaticism which assumes to itself a monopoly of religious truth. In contempt of his most sacred rights, there are persons bearing the name of Christians, who will force themselves in at his door, to probe his conscience and take the measure of his creed;—who will not scruple, with the language of peace on their lips, to invade his spiritual freedom and upbraid him for an honest exercise of judgment in obtaining where best he may, religious light and consolation for himself and his children. How different this inquisitorial spirit from the spirit of Christ! That would never let us cross the humblest threshold, without a feeling of human love and reverence—without the solemn thought—'Here dwells a child of God, the possessor of a free, responsible, immortal mind.' In the presence of humanity every genuine nature is touched with a holy veneration, and the vile accents of a patronising condescension die away on the speechless lips. When the virtuous father of a family stands before us, great in native worth of soul, amidst all the outward tokens of poverty and an humble calling—what a feeling of honour and sympathy goes forth spontaneously from our hearts, to greet that truest expression of human respectability! As we look on his honest, open countenance, where no evil passion or sinful habit has left its deforming trace, and listen to the earnest tones

of his manly voice uttering with plainness and simplicity the convictions of a genuine heart, we are made to feel what is really noble in man. It is we, come from what station we may, who are beneath; it is we who have to rise to him. We would fain reverse the language of Peter to the prostrate Cornelius, and say—'Brother, lift me up from my lowness, that I may be wise and pure and content like thee.'

We have thus shown, what the spirit of human brotherhood is not. Let us now ask, what it is? Where are we to look for it?—In reverence for man's moral and spiritual attributes, and in strenuous efforts to rouse, protect and develope them. These alone make the man. They invest with a true greatness every diversity of outward circumstance; and wherever they find free scope and ample exercise, cherish the inward principle of human dignity and happiness. To draw out the latent elements of moral and spiritual good in the lower classes, requires, it is true, great accompanying efforts to improve their physical and social condition. Only these latter objects should never be regarded as themselves an end. In the eye of a genuine philanthropy, they are but means to the attainment of a far higher end;—and that end is to unfold the entire worth of the inner man—all his heart, all his conscience, all his rational and spiritual faculties. A process of this kind is not only compatible with great diversity of outward condition, but I contend, is even promoted by it. The many sides of our common nature, its endless treasures of goodness and beauty, its manifold capacities of noble endu-

rance and heroic effort—could never be brought to light, were it not tried and tested in the most opposite states of existence, and exposed to the utmost variety of external stimulus. A forced uniformity of condition would deprive us of these rich results. In the great science of society, it must be confessed, that we have yet much to learn. History records a series of experiments only partially successful, at times subsiding into injustice and oppression, and then bursting forth in wild abortive efforts at communism and outward equality. Yet these lessons have not been wholly lost on us. Men's minds are now more intent than ever on settling the conditions of the great problem which is to secure the harmony and tranquil progress of the human family. Casting off the prejudices inherited from feudal times, we are beginning to feel the respect that is due to all honest industry, and to perceive that it can only flourish in the air of freedom. The important bearing of a proper adjustment of taxation on the contentment and energy of the community, is becoming a general subject of reflection and inquiry. Our municipalities are directing their attention to the public health and to the proper structure and drainage of the dwellings of the poor. The demand for universal education of a higher order is already a popular cry, and likely to swell into a popular enthusiasm. Many and increasing are the opportunities offered to every class in all our great towns, for the acquisition of knowledge and the cultivation of refined and rational tastes. Not a few are the incitements (would they were greater!) to the accu

mulation of property, and even to the investment of it in land. Small properties extensively ramified among the working class—the realised fruit of their forethought and industry—would tend above every thing to pervade society with a spirit of healthful conservatism, and, like the attenuated fibres which the tap-root of the oak sends out far and wide into the soil, help to sustain, erect and firm, the venerable trunk and springing branches of our time-honoured constitution. Such are the movements which the spirit of human brotherhood dwells on with profoundest complacency and the most cheering anticipations. Material and secular in their outward aspect, they are the conditions and precursors of the loftiest moral advancement. Spiritual men must step forth to welcome and aid them, and by the fearless preaching of a manly, earnest and truthful religion, breathe into them a higher aim and make them subserve a nobler purpose.

Taking our stand on the vantage-ground of these great efforts of social reform, let it be our first object to multiply the number of virtuous and happy homes. The domestic hearth is the seed-plot of a noble and flourishing commonwealth. All laws are vicious, all tendencies are to be deprecated, which increase the difficulty of diffusing through every rank, the refined and holy influences which are cherished by the domestic affections. Reckless speculation among capitalists, disturbing the steady and uniform course of employment—and its sure counterpart, improvidence and debauchery among workmen—are the deadliest foes of the household virtues.

In how small a compass lie all the elements of man's truest happiness, if society were only conducted in a rational and moderate spirit, and its members of every class could be restrained from vicious indulgence and the pursuit of phantoms! A marriage contracted with thoughtfulness and cemented by pure and faithful love, when a fixed position is gained in the world, and a small fund has been already accumulated—hard work and frugal habits at the commencement of domestic life to meet in time the possible demands of a future family—a dwelling comfortably furnished, clean, bright, salubrious and sweet—children well trained and early sent to school—a small collection of good books on the shelves—a few blossoming plants in the window—some well-selected engravings on the walls—a piano, it may be, a violin or a flute to accompany the family concert—home made happy in the evening by cheerful tasks and mutual improvement, exchanged at times for the conversation of friend or neighbour of kindred taste and congenial manners—these are conditions of existence, within reach of every one who will seek them—resources of the purest happiness lost to thousands, because a wrong direction is given to their tastes and energies, and they roam abroad in pursuit of interest and enjoyment which they might create in rich abundance at home. This is no romantic, visionary picture. It is a sober accessible possibility, such as even now, under the pressure of many adverse circumstances, is realised in the homes of not a few working men who have learned the art of extracting competence from narrow means, and

maintaining genuine respectability in a humble station.

If this truer estimate of the value and honour of life were more generally entertained among mankind —the gradations of rank and the differences of social position—even those which are most strongly marked, and the favourite objects of rhetorical invective—would only bring more clearly into view, through the contrasted diversities of its outward manifestation, that inward worth of the universal soul which is the bond of human brotherhood. Where all is planed down to one dead level of external equality, or where the accident of suddenly acquired wealth constitutes the only social distinction—it may be questioned, whether the spirit of genuine humanity is more deeply felt, and whether there is a less frequent exhibition of coarse and brutal selfishness, than where the intercourse of man with man is to some extent confined and regulated by those lines of demarcation between different ranks, which have grown out of the historical antecedents of an old country, and so far from indicating a slavish spirit, are consistent with the highest feelings of mutual courtesy and individual self-respect. A virtuous and intelligent working-class, exempt alike from rudeness and servility, must react with beneficial effect on the moral condition of the higher ranks, and bring them more under the salutary restraint of public opinion: and an aristocracy, that without stepping affectedly out of its sphere or renouncing its ancient traditions, still founds its influence on its virtues, and bears itself respectfully and

courteously to all men, may be the means of diffusing a refinement of manners and an elevated tone of sentiment through all the classes which are ranged beneath it.

But how childish—how far below the proper aim of every humane and thoughtful mind—is this invidious comparison of rank with rank—of one outward condition of men and brethren with another! One feels a kind of shame in even alluding to the subject. The very entertainment of it seems to betray a little and a selfish soul. How often must we be reminded, that we are all members of God's great family! That we have all been placed where we are by his wisdom! That we have all one common heritage of duties and trials, temptations and griefs—none spared affliction, because they are high—none shut out from blessing, because they are low! And that, when this short scene of earth has passed away, all must alike give account of the trust confided to them, at that solemn tribunal—where the lady who now wears the diadem of these realms, and the humblest daughter of poverty and toil, will bow their heads and bend their knees, side by side, before the Father and Judge of all! If all hearts were laid open—if the secrets of all homes from the palace to the cottage were exposed to view—there would, doubtless, be found a more equitable balancing of human conditions—a far more impartial allotment of the means of human happiness—than the superficial aspect of things seems to indicate. Look where you will, to the highest or the lowest estate—let the disparity of outward circumstances be as

great as can be conceived—you will ever observe lawless desires, ungovernable appetites and ill disciplined feelings, pride, discontent, envy, hatred and selfishness—pursuing their victim through every social region with the same deep sense of incurable misery, which no splendour and luxury can evade, and the heaviest privations of poverty cannot aggravate. On the other hand, the pure, kind, trustful, devout heart, intent on duty and only ambitious of usefulness—wherever its scene of action be cast—bears in the beaming eye and open brow and gladsome voice, unfailing evidence of inward peace and joy.

The true beauty of humanity lies all within, and is rendered more conspicuous by the very diversity of its outward garb. The contrast strikes the eye, and goes to the heart. How often in surveying the great man's splendid mansion and wandering through his ancient woods and beautiful gardens—have we met with some touching memorial of human affection—some record of friend or child or partner taken away—some sculptured urn or votive tablet commemorative of loves or triumphs or griefs, fast fading in the distant past—which affectingly reminded us, that here in the very midst of this princely magnificence, hearts like our own once throbbed to the common joy and sorrow of our race! And so, when we quit our own comfortable, perhaps luxurious, homes to visit the sick or dying bed of some poor and virtuous neighbour—and mark, how deep is the trust, how calm the hope, how sweet and holy the affection, how delicate and tender the

attentions—which bring their soothing ministrations to the pain and faintness of yielding nature, and transform that lowly room into an outer court of the world of light—the very change in the associated circumstances makes the truth and reality of those blessed influences more perceptible to us, and imprints what is best in our common humanity with a deeper love and reverence on our hearts.

It is possible, that the influences of universal education, a growing respect for all useful labour, and a readier command by every class of the means of domestic comfort and culture, may in time diffuse so general a refinement of mind and manners through all ranks, as imperceptibly to efface the social distinctions which now exist, and render possible a literal fulfilment of the most enthusiastic visions of human brotherhood: and perhaps the strongest reason that can be alleged for not violently destroying our present restrictions, is a conviction, that they are a needful preparation for the ultimate change, and afford the safest and surest means of a gradual transition.—In the meantime, let not the barriers of separation between different ranks be so impassable, as to obstruct a free passage for any who are qualified to ascend, from a lower to a higher sphere.—To exclude them by any artificial test of creed or race, is an odious tyranny. Let them rise. They are the born aristocracy of heaven. Nevertheless we are continually brought back to the great truth, which every aspect of society illustrates and confirms, that humanity in all situations, must draw its strength and blessing from itself. Wherever on this

earth an understanding is active to know and serve the truth—wherever a heart beats with kind and pure and generous affections—wherever a home spreads its sheltering wing over husband and wife and parent and child—there under every diversity of outward circumstance, the true worth and dignity and peace of man's soul are within reach of all. To that high and honourable position of self-dependence, rich in exhaustless treasures of inward happiness,—let us put forth every effort and use all our influence to raise up step by step the down-trodden and grovelling multitudes of our fellow men.

XI.

FAITH, THE ASSURANCE OF THE SOUL.

MARK, v. 36.
"Be not afraid, only believe."

CHRIST bore into human hearts the strong conviction of a Divine presence, and made men feel the invisible Reality that was ever working within them and around them. This was the faith which put forth a virtue for the moral healing of the soul and the tranquillising of its doubts and fears. Death had overshadowed with his cold eclipse the late bright and happy home of Jairus. His beloved child lay stretched in pale unconsciousness. All eyes were streaming with tears; and the voice of comfortless woe was heard in his chambers. Suddenly the calm benignity of Christ appears in the midst of the mourners—rebuking their want of faith and unaffected by their scorn. It falls like sunshine on the darkened heart of the parent, and the tumult of his grief is hushed at the soothing words—'Be not afraid, only believe.'

On this as on other occasions, the words elicited from Christ by the ordinary casualties of our terrestrial existence, bring into view some great spiritual principle, and betray the deep fund of eternal truth that lay hid in his inmost soul. We learn

here the power and effect of faith. It puts us into the consciousness of a divine presence, and dispels all fear. 'Be not afraid, only believe.' How mighty is this power! When it descends into the heart's depths—a pure and genuine efflux of the Spirit of God—it makes all the difference between a life of cheerful blessedness and a life of gloomy submission or trembling anxiety. Here are two men—beholding the face of the same universe, swept along by the same resistless tide of circumstances, possessors of the same desires, affections, and capacities. And yet how different is their mental state, produced by reflection on the same phenomena!—One sees in them ultimate facts, beyond which he knows nothing, and can divine nothing. There they are.—Whence they come—why they are there—what they are leading to—is to him a dark, impenetrable mystery. For himself, his whole creed is shut up in two words—existence and non-existence. Yesterday, he was nothing; to-day, he is; to-morrow, he will be nothing again. He looks on the countenance of the world; but to him it is a blank. He can trace its outline, and number its features; and give the form and measure of its material constituents; but he reads no expression there—no indication of latent mind. The broad eye of heaven beams with no intelligence to him. To him no glow of benevolent affection is revealed in the mantling blush of fruits and flowers, that suffuses the cheek of earth. He feels no silent influence of parental love in the warm breath of life that circu-

lates around him, and pulsates in the springing germ and in the free and happy movement of every beast and bird and creeping thing. To him all is law, mechanism, mysterious force—no more. Such is man's ultimate consciousness, when faith is struck out of it.

The other beholds the same face, but perceives also its significance. He reads and interprets its benignant expression. He discerns the wonderful intellect and the deep heart of love that imprint their influence on all the features of the universe. He accepts the sympathy that is proffered him, and gives himself up to it in full reliance on a higher Mind. The warm hue of benevolence which is shed over creation, suffices for his genial trust, though the scattered shades which chequer it, may be inexplicable. He concludes that they have a purpose, though unknown to him. He enjoys the special blessing of all good hearts—that he can put confidence in unexplained intentions, when kindness and benevolent forethought have been habitually experienced. As we trust the long tried affection of a human friend, when for reasons satisfactory to him, he now and then withholds from us his ultimate purposes;—so pious souls, acquiescing in ignorance, and conscious of absolute dependence on the Parent Mind, dissolve their fears and their doubts in perfect faith. They rest in the firm assurance, that God both can and will do what is best. Faith is the joy and support of their being—the sunshine which fills their breasts. So different in

their effect on man's whole life, are the admission and the denial of a benevolent Intelligence in the government and working of the world.

Some faith is inevitable from the constitution of our minds, though it may not have a sovereign Intellect for its object. All men form expectations, and act upon them, for which they can give no reason. The succession of the seasons, with the varying proportions of day and night as the latitude recedes from the equator—the ebb and flow of the tides—the intervention of eclipses—and the recurrence of periodical winds—are facts on which every one relies with perfect confidence. He would be thought a madman who hesitated to calculate on them, in laying out his future course. Yet no one can prove, why the planetary system on whose movements these phenomena depend, *must* keep for ever the course which it has hitherto pursued, and why a change *may* not take place in it to-morrow. Or if there *are* grounds which seem to justify a trust in the perpetuity of the present order of things, they will be found on examination to be *moral* grounds—our reliance on the wisdom and goodness of the Supreme Mind. And this inference carries us at once into the sphere of religious faith, and shows how naturally the lowest and simplest of our mental instincts runs up into a spiritual affection. In some men faith never rises above this primary instinct—that unconscious reliance on the future, which is indispensable to all connected and prospective action. It discerns the consecutive sequences of material things, but apprehends not the higher idea,

indicative of mind, which results from a comprehensive survey of the entire circle of their harmonious relations. The faith which soars above the range of mere scientific laws, must carry human analogies into the organism of the world, and have its source in the affections and moral sentiments. It must spring from a spontaneous sympathy with the wisdom and the love which are the hidden soul of all material operations—and float around us as a spiritual reality, responsive to the human heart from the deep heart of the universe. Hence the close dependence of religious faith on our moral condition and the supremacy of conscience. Low-thoughted selfishness, vicious appetites and worldly anxieties limit the vision of the soul to the material laws which revolve in narrow cycles round the centre of our personal existence, and directly influence the sources of our individual gratification or importance. Under such restraints, there can of course be no wide-extended sympathies, no breadth of view adequate to embrace the significance of that benignant expression which characterizes the largest aspects of the universe. There may indeed be a profession of religion ; but there can be no living, genuine faith, —only some cold, traditional semblance of it, veiling perhaps a hollow heart and a barren selfishness.

The first condition, then, of a true faith is the free surrender of our minds to what we feel to be the sovereign law of all moral being—as revealed by conscience within, expressed in the lives of prophets, saints and sages without, and reflected with concentrated brightness from the glorious personality of

Christ. It will grow and gather strength from hearty concurrence with all the requirements of that divine law—from generous self-abandonment to all high purposes, all noble impulses, all pure affections, and every work and word of brave, earnest and faithful love. We thus put ourselves on the side of God, and open our hearts to his inspiration. We ally ourselves with the Power that sways the course of events. So far as our energies will reach, we put ourselves on the side of God's holiness and God's strength. As far as our insight will carry us, we ally ourselves with God's wisdom and God's truth. What mind is there within the circuit of Christian influences, that has not at some moment or other felt this strong impulse towards God? It is the solemn crisis—the turning-point—of our human destiny, when God calls to us from on high, and perhaps will never call again. Happy he, who listens and obeys. Happy he, who throws himself with all his energy and affection into the course which God opens before him. If he pursues it, he has got the earnest of salvation. From that small seed of incipient faith a mighty and enduring trust will grow. Conscience will set her seal on the purpose taken. Experience will confirm and ratify the suggestions of a pure heart, and fix and deepen their influence. God will reward the confidence reposed in Him, by the infusion of a deeper trust and a holier love. Love will become predominant in the mind. All things will be read and interpreted in its light. Fear will be overpowered and expelled, and the dark shades that lingered under its influence, will pass away. Man's life will

undergo a change like that in the family of Jairus, healed by the presence of the Son of God,—when grief and the fear of death vanished at his approach.

Fear not, thou who believest—for this faith overcometh the world. Realise to thyself the power and glory and beauty that must inhere in Infinite Mind. Judge from the faint rudiments of mental excellence in the wise and virtuous of earth, what must be its absolute perfectness in God. Thou hast confidence in many a human soul; and were its strength and insight equal to its love, thy confidence would be 'perfect and entire, wanting nothing.' And hast thou less confidence in God, the Parent-Mind—that exhaustless source of good, from whose inspiration have flowed all those sweet and pure and generous affections which cause thee to repose with undoubting trust on the bosom of thy friend? Cherish, then—but on far higher grounds—the same blessed trust in God. By upright endeavour and holy aspiration put thyself into harmony with his Spirit; and thy doom is sealed for bliss. Thou wilt bear about with thee a charmed life, whose inner peace the sorest evils of this life cannot reach. Sometimes doubts and apprehensions will haunt the mind in its searchings for truth, as if truth were but a name, and the thoughts of the wise were spent in the chase of shadows. But thou, Christian, hast no such fear. Thou dwellest in the presence of the living God. Thou knowest, that principle—grounded in the eternal laws of mind and emanating from the unchangeable essence of God—cannot perish. Thou knowest, come what may, the light of truth cannot

be put out. Thou knowest, that Virtue can never be despoiled of its deathless crown, and that Love will always bloom in unfading beauty. Therefore, art thou at rest in the depths of thine own soul, though for a season the outer world crumble into ruins, and its order and harmony be trodden under foot.

Faith lifts us to the conception of an ideal, faintly discernible through the endless vista of immortal mind—which the actual life of man, even in its best and happiest state, never realises. The Present is but the infancy of a more glorious Future, slowly unfolding itself in the vast counsels of the Almighty. Trust in the final realisation of that fair ideal, is our best consolation under the disappointments which so constantly mock our sanguine expectations of earthly good. Be not disquieted, when the course of events runs most counter to the wishes of the virtuous and the wise, and seems to frustrate the issue that might have been looked for from the general tendencies of Providence. You want depth of insight and comprehensiveness of view, to embrace the vast compass and endless ramifications of the divine ways. Think, what an atom is this planet—and what a point is all its history—in those abysses of space and time which embosom it! And if there be a Mind, perfect through its infinity, which enfolds and penetrates all things—how are we whose mental vision cannot grasp the universal and the absolute, competent to measure His purposes, or to perceive what is ultimately best for that boundless range of influences and complexity of events of

which He has the disposal? Raise yourselves to the height of this great thought, and have peace. Let the consciousness of your own ignorance, in view of the infinite Intelligence, fill you with acquiescence and trust.

Only in the light of this sublime faith, can the history of our race be read without despondency. We profess to believe in the progress of the human species; and if we embrace large spaces of time, and look at the average result of events, experience justifies our faith. Yet, as respects any visible fruit in this world, the labours and self-sacrifices of noble-minded individuals and even the efforts of energetic and virtuous communities, seem often of little account in the eye of God. In that long and varied chronicle of the past, what records occur page after page, of hopeless ruin and unmerited suffering—of civilisation for ever extinguished, and of freedom after all its struggles finally trodden out of existence by its remorseless foes! Where are the living faiths and breathing literatures—harmonious utterances of a nation's inmost soul,—that once gave animation and character to wide regions of the East, now surrendered to sloth and ignominy? What has become of the magnificent cities, the busy harbours, the thronged roads, the crowded schools and churches of many tracts in Asia and Africa, where arts and industry once reigned—where letters and philosophy found a favoured seat—where learned and holy men, the mental progenitors of our Christian civilisation, impregnated with a purer spirit the faith and manners of their contemporaries? Gone—perished—

swept away, as by the angel of desolation, from the face of the earth—a few lonely ruins, where wild beasts and the roving herdsman seek a shelter from the heat, the sole traces of their former existence. Few things strike the spirit with a deeper sorrow, than the spectacle of so many virtuous but abortive efforts to establish justice and freedom in the earth. That glorious promise of constitutional liberty in the early history of many European nations—how was it crushed in its opening germ by calamitous accidents, and buried beneath a weight of priestly and regal despotism, under which it has never blossomed again! Why were the brave burghers of Spain, anticipating England itself in their noble efforts to plant freedom on a municipal and representative basis—permitted to be overpowered and brought under a servile yoke?—Is the day of promise passed, never more to return? On a survey of this sad experience, fear seizes us, when we look at Europe now. Are despotic force and frantic revolution always to share the earth in terrible alternation between them? Do the voice of the wise, and the arm of the brave, and the blood of the patriot, go for nothing in the wild conflict that is desolating the earth? Shall ancient nationalities and the long precedent of noble histories be extinguished by the cold-blooded treachery and selfishness, which counts human rights as so many words on paper, that may be effaced by the stroke of a pen? Yea, efforts that sprang from the purest philanthropy—that struck off the fetters of the slave and paid the price of his emancipation—even these have failed to realise as yet the

generous hope in which they were conceived, and only re-inforce the mournful truth, that good in this world is not always the overt and immediate fruit of good.

What should be the effect of this afflictive retrospect on our minds? Despair—and sluggish fear—and the passive relinquishment of the world to the power of evil? Oh no; it is precisely in cases such as these, that faith comes up to our aid and puts courage into the heart, where but for it we should be paralysed with hopeless sorrow. We must strive to anticipate the thought of God, and more widely generalise our views, and not let partial and insulated results disconcert and oppress us. We must tranquillise our minds with the aspect of that solemn eternity which shuts in our earthly life on every side, and reflect on the possible issues to present events that may be preparing for all human souls in its impenetrable bosom. From the actual which surrounds us, we must ascend to the ideal which faith permits us to conceive. We must live in the mind, and see, as it were, with the eye of the all-seeing God;—not, however, to forego the responsibilities of our own free-will, or to become dreamy and helpless visionaries—but to gain a firmer resolve and a clearer insight, to hope on, when all human power seems against us—to preserve unweakened our trust in great principles, and to maintain still, calmly and undauntedly, the battle for truth and right. Such a faith, and such fruits of faith, bring their own reward. God may not allow us to have any visible part in the redemption of the

world from its wrongs: but we shall at least have thrown our contribution of influence—such as it was—into that great stream of tendency which is ever accumulating against the strong-holds of falsehood and injustice, and must in time bring them down. In the conflict with evil, we shall have purified and blessed our own souls and transmitted a lesson of virtue to future generations. 'Be not afraid, then, only believe.'

Again, fear not for yourselves and for your worldly condition—whatever changes may overtake you, and however you may sink in wealth and station, if these things be not the just consequences of your own folly and perverseness. Then indeed they are penalties, and must be borne as such. But if otherwise, see rather an appointment of mercy in whatever happens, and take it as it was sent. You will thus by your own mental energy, transform it into good. Faith will give you strength to meet new duties, and master all your difficulties. It will come over you with invigorating effect, like a breath from God himself, when you pour out your soul in morning prayer, and look forward to the trials and toils of the coming day. Consider what your circumstances require, and manfully accommodate yourself to them. Do right. Wait on God. Ally yourself with his providence, and trust in Him. Resolution and effort will rise up to the demand of all your wants. As yet you cannot tell, what a blessing may be hidden for you in this adversity. For while the providence of God seems often to the outward eye, irretrievably adverse in the case of

nations,—individuals, under the heaviest misfortunes that may overwhelm their country or their time, have always the power through vigour of mind and moral faithfulness, to extricate and raise themselves. Amid the wreck of States—in an age strewed with ruins—noble souls will still rear their heads untouched ;—as plants whose roots survive under huge and tumbled fragments of antique masonry, creep out into the light and climb the highest projections, and wreath with their bright festoons of leaf and flower, the incumbent mass that has crushed all grosser materials into dust. It is a glorious fact, that in the deepest of this world's depressions, one individual has often, by strong faith and virtuous effort, exerted a vast redeeming influence over the condition of society. Think of this, ye whose hearts are ready to fail, and it will keep you from despair, and fill you with fresh energy for every struggle and endeavour it may be needful to sustain. Were such a faith more general, states could not fall. It is the want of faithful, noble-minded individuals that brings states to ruin. Even then, when all the glory of the world has perished, and nothing remains but submission to the overpowering force of circumstances—peace and blessing may be found within—in the sanctuary of the heart, where affection nestles, and right principles have still a refuge, and the Spirit of God is ever present to counsel and to cheer. Never is virture left without sympathy—sympathy dearer and tenderer for the misfortune that has tried it, and proved its fidelity. What is sweeter than the sympathy of the

true-hearted few who honour us for what we are, and will not forsake us, because the world has cast us off? Nay, if we are left all alone, what is sweeter than the silent sympathy of God, and the peace of our own thoughts? That Divine Friend abideth with the pure in heart for ever. 'Be not afraid, only believe.'

Lastly, fear not death. There where knowledge ceases, faith should strongest prove. If you have truly believed in God, you will feel, that death only remits you more entirely into his power; and that conviction should give you peace. If death were a resolution into nothingness—the extinction of the mysterious force which has held together in vital union for a brief sum of years, a few particles of dust—you might then give way to fear, or gloomy resignation be your only alternative. But though you comprehend not death with all its consequences —this at least you know, that it gives you back into the hands of the living God—that God, whom you have found, when you have sought Him with all your heart, always accessible and ever near—and who will not abandon you, when more than ever you need His support—when you relinquish your hold of all that you have clung to on earth, and go to Him alone, with whom is lodged the unsearchable disposal of your future doom. Faith only discerns and grasps the invisible realities of the future life. Hold up her lamp and look Death calmly in the face—that last unfailing messenger from God, who brings up the solemn procession of our mortal years, as one after another they rise out of the dark depths

of the future, and flit across the present scene, and vanish away in the dim, dissolving past. When the shade deepens on your descending way—when the eye grows dim—when the hands tremble and the knees fail—when the murmurs of the receding world die faintly on the ear—when friends look on you with an expression of tenderer love, as though they might never look on you again—then know that the hour of your departure draweth nigh, and commend your sinking spirit to God. He will hear you if you call upon Him then, and stretch forth a Father's arm to bear you up in the awful moment of transition. 'Be not afraid; then as ever, only believe.'

XII.

THE SPIRIT OF THE COMMANDMENTS AND THE SPIRIT OF LIFE.

MATTHEW, xix. 17.

"If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments."

IN their original utterance these words—'life' and 'commandments'—must have been understood, as they were doubtless meant, in an outward sense; —the former referring to the expected kingdom of the Messiah, and the latter denoting the positive moral law contained in the decalogue or deduced from it. They conveyed the idea of something to be done for something to be gained—the idea of a task and of a reward. Such an idea was in accordance with an elementary conception of human relations to God. Anything more refined and spiritual could in that age hardly have taken effect on the actual condition of opinion. But the idea lay open to the perversion—that the service and the recompense, in other words, the condition and the result—did not grow out of the original constitution of the universe, but were appointed by the arbitrary will of the Sovereign Ruler, simply to express his absolute authority or illustrate his gratuitous mercy. Under this form the idea passed into the Christian

church, and reached in the course of centuries, the furthest limits of fanatical extravagance. In the middle ages, the notions of ecclesiastical perfection —all the qualities that were believed to make up the character of a saint—receded to the greatest distance from the natural morality of the conscience and the heart. Separation from human affections and domestic charities—abstinence from innocent enjoyments—the renunciation of useful activity and healthful interests—such was the discipline imposed by the Church on her chosen servants, to free their souls from the pollutions of a state that lay under its Maker's curse, and to fit them for immediate entrance on the joys of heaven. Earth and heaven were contradictions in the scheme of Providence: the fruition of one involved the surrender of the other. Earth's blessings were not to be relished—scarcely to be used. The pilgrim must hasten through them with fear and trembling, lest in tarrying his robe should contract some stain that would exclude him from the choirs of the blessed.

We can see a reason for this intense distrust of the world, when the Gospel was first preached. It was the natural reaction of pure and fervent minds, in which the religious element had burst forth with a new life—against the profound corruption, the all-pervading carnality and worldliness, of the heathen civilisation. Without so sharp a distinction of the ideas of heaven and earth—so vivid a presentiment of the contrast between them—the new Religion would never have broken the moral torpor of the world, or begun its great work of spiritualising the

souls of men. But every general impulse has a tendency to run into excess. One element of human error, though inseparable perhaps from divine truth on its first annunciation, and even necessary to its rapid and extensive reception—will swell into disproportionate magnitude unless carefully checked, and perpetuate itself far beyond the period, when it could be of any collateral service in the moral renovation of the world. The brutal sensuality and bloodthirstiness, the stoic pride and cold-hearted ambition, against which the saints and martyrs of the ancient Church set up the protest of their warning voice and ascetic example, are now—thanks to the principles which they diffused! gradually dying out over the whole civilised world. Juster views of life's duties and of human rights and of intercourse among nations, are silently making their way against old prejudices and old interests. The triumph of the commercial over the warlike spirit—the deepening cry for the total abolition of slavery—the unceasing diffusion of education—the silent power of the press—and those wonderful means of rapid locomotion and instantaneous communication of thought between the remotest points on the surface of the globe—are all creating a vast chasm between ancient and modern societies, which demands an altered treatment and application of the traditional doctrines of Religion, to adjust them to the new point of view from which they must now be surveyed.

The arts of peace, wide mental culture, especially the prosecution of physical science, and the accumu-

lation of material riches, are the objects to which the energies of mankind are in this age especially directed; and if these are attended by temptations and dangers of their own, they are also giving birth to a new class of virtues of no mean or ignoble aim. When men are conscious, that they are fulfilling in the highest sense their duty to God and their fellow creatures, by the vigorous application of all their powers to develope the varied resources of human well-being and happiness—it is an unmeaning cant and hypocrisy, sure to disgust many honest and right-minded men and to alienate them from all Religion—to call upon them in language, adapted to a very different condition of mind, to renounce all care and interest for the present world, and to fix their whole souls on that invisible state, which the most spiritual minds find so much difficulty in realising, and which is most easily conceived, as the development and completion of aims and efforts honourably pursued on earth. As man's nature opens under the manifold stimulants of an advancing civilisation, it will no more be satisfied with phrases, but insist on realities. The verbal decisions of the past will no longer suffice for its contentment. We must put the interpretation of our own awakened consciences and quickened intellects on the great principles of faith and duty transmitted to us by Christ; and in the life and the commandments of which he spake in the text, we must find a deeper and more spiritual meaning, than it was competent for that first age to draw out of his words.

This remark must not be misunderstood. I would

not sublimate the primitive essence of Christian truth, to condense it again in some concrete form of modern philosophy. To all such spiritual alchemy I am wholly opposed. The Gospel message bears with it through all ages an imperishable soul of faith and love, though clothed with ever-changing forms in its ceaseless transmigration from one state of human society to another; and in the living power of that soul, as revealed in the words and acts of Christ, I would ever seek the inner principle of those new duties which rise upon us with higher claims as humanity pursues its onward course. The one eternal object of the Gospel, prepared by Hebrew prophets and heathen sages, consummated in Christ, and from age to age renewed by the holy men who have inherited his spirit—is to bring us back from our wanderings in folly, selfishness and sin, to God, our Father; to unite our hearts and wills in living communion with Him; and to incite us through the impulse of a strong and transforming affection to work freely, trustfully, and rejoicingly in and with and for Him alone. This is the true Gospel of Christ —'the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.' From this point of view all our duties must be estimated, and the measure taken of our loftiest and remotest hopes.

What does the Gospel, so understood, demand of us? It calls upon us, as free and intelligent beings, to work with the Sovereign Spirit of wisdom and love. That is real virtue. Nothing else can put us in a right relation towards God. But God is our Father. So regarding Him, we cannot suppose Him

to will gratuitous suffering ; and the whole structure and tendency of his creation may satisfy us, that we have not erred in this *a priori* conception of His design. Mysterious in parts, it is clearly beneficent in its leading purpose and general result. The worst evils are thrown into it, by man's perverse resistance to its laws. Artificial pains and self-inflicted mortifications cannot be in harmony with the divine economy of things. To reject the good and the beautiful which Providence offers for blameless enjoyment to the pure mind, betrays more hatred of the world than love of God. To keep the commandments in the largest and noblest sense, is not mere abstinence, a simple negation of impulse and action, enforced by 'Thou shalt not'—but hearty and energetic co-operation with the Divine Will, for the production of all good far and wide, and the freest self-development of a spiritual nature through reason, conscience and affection, in harmony with its original constitution, its assigned sphere of action, and its indicated end.

It is true, that pain and effort and self-sacrifice are often essential to the full accomplishment of this divine work—not for their own sake, but to overcome the effects of previous evil, which have been allowed to accumulate through long self-neglect, or brought upon life by the violence and injustice of others. We perceive on reflection, that our own vicious habits and affections have raised up barriers between ourselves and God ; or that we are so circumscribed by the oppressive power of tyrannical and wicked men, that we cannot freely obey our con-

sciences, and use, as we see that we ought to use, the resources of good which Providence has put within our reach. These evils must be overcome. They lie on the threshold of a religious life. Our sinful habits must be corrected; our evil affections rooted out; will, conscience and feeling must be brought into harmony, that we may become perfect masters of ourselves. Whatever is unjust or inhumane in our relations with others, must be resisted and overpowered, that we may have free and wide scope for independent action, and the fullest play of our moral and spiritual affections. For if it be true, as Paul says, 'Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty,' it is not less true, that where there is no liberty inward and outward, the spirit of the Lord cannot be.

Man's life seems often spent in efforts, not wholly successful, to achieve this liberty; but it is not, therefore, spent in vain. The character is strengthened and ennobled by every earnest and sincere endeavour to realise our convictions of the right and true. There is no satisfaction so sweet as the consciousness of vanquished difficulty and asserted justice. There is no reflection so delightful as that of handing down a better and a happier world to our children, and our children's children. But this struggle with evils of artificial creation—this warfare with tyranny and intolerance—this life-long self-sacrifice of the high-minded and virtuous—is not the essential, nor will it be the permanent condition of humanity on earth, though some would fain keep it so, to justify their own narrow and mis-

erable theology. These things are but preparatory —the birth-throes of a better time;—and though there must ever remain enough of conflict with divers forms of evil without and within, to furnish our moral discipline, and stimulate our latent powers into activity—beyond the havoc and disorder which girt in with dark and frowning aspect our immediate view, the mental eye discerns the distant peaks of that brighter future, when this earth will no more be a vast battle-field of hatred and oppression, but a blooming garden for the abundant growth of all those seeds of good which the Creator has scattered on every soil and sown in every heart. Unless all the tendencies and indications of the world's history deceive us, this is the future which awaits us; and to prepare for it by intelligent discourse respecting it, we must give up the worn out and unmeaning diction of a large part of our current theology. We must breathe the eternal spirit into new modes of speech. We must still address ourselves to that deep faith in God and goodness which lies hid in every human breast; but we must not attempt to call it forth by the extinct magic of phrases, which reason rejects and from which the affections recoil. What are the commandments that are everlastingly obligatory on man? Nothing arbitrary—nothing conventional—a creation of time and place, and positive institution, enforced by outward authority; but rather the varied applications of one unchanging law, grounded in our moral constitution, and moulding it to its destined perfection. Of this law—the principle is a spirit of loving sym-

pathy with God; and its fulfilment, the application of that spirit, under the guidance of reason, to the endless objects and interests of every part of human life.

There is a relative, as well as a more general, perfection in man, which must not be lost sight of in examining the question of his proper vocation in life. There is required of him not only a culture of his whole being as a man, but also a diligent and faithful adaptation of certain of his powers to the particular circumstances in which he is placed. Life's purpose is only adequately accomplished, in discharging both these claims; and indeed the more limited service is a necessary condition of the general development. You find yourself, then, occupying a given position in the world. It has its appointed duties—its special opportunities of usefulness—trials also, difficulties and temptations of its own. Take your lot, as it is assigned you, without murmuring. Make the best of it: and if in the eyes of men it seems unhonoured and unenviable, ennoble it by your own spirit, and work your way through it by character and honest industry, to something better and happier. If, on the other hand, you find it accord with your inclination, and open before you a fair prospect of worldly advancement—be assured there is nothing irreligious in honorably aiming at success and eminence in it, and still less in openly avowing, that such is your object. Every pursuit which conduces to the welfare of the world, has its appropriate honor attending it; and a genuine vir-

tue is developed by enthusiasm for what is highest in our own line of action. You may treat life as a problem, which has to be wrought out to a successful result, with certain moral conditions attached to it. Do not, because it looks difficult, timorously shrink from attempting the solution; but work through every part of it, whether you get the whole result or not, without violating one of its moral conditions. Draw the utmost from it that it will yield, for temporal prosperity, for social weight and position, for honour, usefulness, mental culture and refined enjoyment—consistently with the strictest integrity, with health and the exercise of the affections, with a remembrance of the end of life and a cheerful submission to the Divine Will. Whatever your vocation in life—whether you labour with the head or with the hand—whether you write books, or manufacture cloth—whether your ships cross every sea, or your whole stock in trade is contained within the four walls of your humble shop—whether you sit on the bench of justice, or earn your honest wages from week to week—honour your work as assigned you by God, who regards not its subject-matter, but the spirit in which it is performed,—and, as in his sight, with a loyal and devoted heart, strive to be outdone by no one in the completeness and efficiency of its execution. This is the healthy view of our human world. Contentment, comfort, abundance—depend on its wide diffusion. It would put every one in his proper place, and fit him with his proper task. It would let none be idle, and leave none in want. It would abolish useless

privilege, and bring all under the constraint of wholesome duty. This view reconciles earth and heaven. While we are in the world, it makes us, in the best of senses, friends with the world,—but not less fitted for heaven, when we pass away. It is also the honest and sincere view. Thousands who disown it, act upon it; and none more so, and with a keener eye even to selfish advancement, than some who put forth an exclusive claim to the religious character. Such is the course of action which contributes to relative perfection, by linking our individual lives through specific duties with the general well-being of the world.

But with duties of this description growing out of our particular circumstances, a higher culture must be associated. First, under this head come the affections, which have so large an influence in promoting a more general and purely human perfection. A man without affections, is at best but a reasoning machine. As you cherish your humanity, and wish to prepare it for everlasting communion with God, let your affections be cultivated with ardour and purity through all the successive periods of life. Let each blossom forth beautiful and appropriate in its own season. Let none be nipped by untimely cares, or eaten away by the rust of selfishness, or dashed to the ground in its fresh bloom by the gusts of wild passion and lawless appetite. Let there be time and place for all—each passing by imperceptible gradations into its successor—for youth's sweet loves and open-hearted friendships—for the firmer attachments of maturer years—for the

sacred joys of home—for the blessed anxieties of children's education and settlement in life—for the new interests of the second generation—and for that gentler flow of kind and holy feeling which gathers into it the balmiest memories of the past, and drops its freshening dew on the quiet hour of life's decline. Go not from the world with the joyless consciousness of those, to whom the fountains of its purest bliss have been sealed—whose retrospect of life is an arid waste, because the waters of the heart have not been permitted to gush freely over it, and clothe it with herbage and shade. He has not lived to a true moral purpose, nor drawn from life the rich experience that it ought to yield, whose bosom has not warmly glowed through every changing phasis of interest or relationship, with the tender or generous or solemn emotions that were appropriate to each.

Further, you have a mind, that is not merely an instrument of outward action, but has a value of its own, and may become a treasury of inward wealth, through all time. Cultivate this precious gift for its own sake. If wholly concentrated on the objects of a secular calling, it may warp and contract; while the same practical exercise, if associated with general culture, will only give it vigour and acuteness. Examine it well, and see what elements it contains. If you find in it any peculiar aptitude or remarkable endowment—memory, invention, poetic fancy, power of reasoning or quickness of observation—call forth that indwelling faculty, and direct it to pursuits in which it is born to excel. As far as cir-

cumstances afford you scope, resolve that the one or the many talents which you may possess, shall not lie in you unawakened and powerless, but shall come out and do fitting work for others' good and your own ennoblement, in such measure as God has ordained, and in cheerful response to the invitations which announce His pleasure to the observant mind. Every one who honestly looks for it, will find something peculiarly his own—something which no one else is either placed in circumstances, or endowed with qualities, to do equally well. Therein lies his appointed work, noble and beautiful because it is his own. In that field he will reap his proper fame and glory. We miss the true end of our being, because we heed not the voice of nature, and listen to the false suggestions of prejudice and vanity. Be satisfied with what belongs to you. Draw out your hidden power, not be withheld by a false modesty from making an honest and courageous use of it. In such an effort you will be fulfilling the highest commandment of God.

Again, this world is full of beauty—full of innocent gladness. Open your inmost sense to all the influences of what is brightest and happiest in the scenes around you. Let the spirit be clear and transparent, to receive and transmit these blessed influences of the Creator's love, and send out the light of them on other hearts. Only a pure and gentle soul can feel them. Keep yours so, that they do not come to you in vain. There is impiety in letting all this beauty rise and set on us daily unfelt. To sympathise with the loveliness which blooms

and sparkles in every aspect of this terrestrial paradise, is silent praise—that worship of the heart, more audible to the ear of God, than the chanted litany of the cathedral. No rare and favoured scenes are wanted to kindle this purest spirit of devotion. Wherever the earth teems and blossoms beneath our feet—wherever the bright arch of heaven bends over our heads—the simplest objects of the garden and the field, clothed in the fitting livery of each season as it comes, and set off by the rich lights of the ever-changing skies—suffice to encircle our daily walks with beauty, and fill the quiet, loving heart with a sweet and holy joy which comes to the lips in the unbidden words—'how glorious are thy works, O God!' And how often have these things come and gone, and we hardly marked them as they passed! Yes, year after year brings up the solemn procession of the months, and leaves perhaps not one bright impression on our souls. Treasures of unsuspected beauty abound in this universe, which our dull eyes never see, and our worldly, selfish hearts cannot enjoy. We have dissolved the communion with nature. Our artificial habits and contrariety to her laws, have shut us out from all acquaintance with the finest expressions of her divine countenance. Who that is enslaved, as most are, to our conventional distribution of the hours, has not felt a deep reproach for ungrateful neglect enter his soul, when some fortunate accident has made him a spectator of the glories of the rising day?—The grand silence of earth and skies, just broken by the faint twitter of awakening life—the pure freshness that breathes

over the yet untainted world—the exquisite purple of the eastern hills edged with a silvery rim of light, deepening into broader and more lustrous gold—the pale, cold grey of receding night where moon and stars still beautiful are dimly vanishing—the rich, influent tide of day, so different from the melting softness of its ebbing hues, that is reflected every moment with increasing sharpness and force from the objects over which it rolls, and that lights up as with the joyousness of hope into boundless brilliancy the dewy womb of morning—these effects, so rapid in their succession and so glorious, so like a new creation—take us back to the beginning of time, and transport us to the Eden of our first parents, and make us feel like them, in the presence of these sublime transitions of unchanging nature, that the spirit of the living God is around us.* And shall we go from this world without once tasting the banquet of sweets which the Divine munificence has

* In the earliest ages, the 'break of day' seems to have been viewed by man with mingled feelings of poetry and devotion, and to have awakened solemn thoughts of the unchanging perpetuity of the universe. The most beautiful of the ancient Hindu hymns are addressed to Ushas (the dawn.)—'White-shining, many-tinted, the daughter of heaven, young, white-robed—dissipating the darkness, coming in her car, drawn by purple steeds—following the path of the mornings that have passed, and first of the endless mornings that are to come—Ushas arouses living beings, and awakens every one that lay as dead. For how long a period is it that the dawns have risen? For how long a period will they rise, still desirous to bring us light? Those mortals who beheld the pristine Ushas dawning have passed away; to us she is now visible; and they approach who may behold her in after times.'—*H. H. Wilson's Translation of the Rig-Veda-Sanhita*, p. 298.

provided for us? Thousands have done so, and deemed themselves pious men; though their eye was never raised from the dull soil which they daily paced, and the page whereon God has written his brightest thoughts, was to them a blank.

Think not thou art keeping the commandments, if thou close up thy sense to any manifestation of thy Creator's love in the scenes which encompass thee; but know, thou wilt best prepare thy soul for heaven, by steeping it in the spirit of heavenly beauty, by making thyself familiar with all joyous and lovely things, and carrying away in thy heart the rich extract of their mingled influences, as a cordial for darker and sadder hours. A life without joy is a life without religion. Pain and grief must of course have their share in the texture of our mortal discipline; but assuredly there is something wrong within, or something exceptional in rare misfortune without, if sadness gives a dominant colour to the life—if it is not relieved by the light of hours wherein the spirit of beauty and blameless enjoyment largely reigns—such hours as good men may own without a blush they dearly prize, and a God of love will not condemn.

Art and literature—those choicest products of man's spiritual activity—what are they but embodiments of the subtile spirit of beauty which floats over the face of the universe and penetrates to its living heart? And why do they spring forth, and perpetuate themselves in undying forms from age to age—but that men might fill their homes with the concentrated essence of what is holiest and best,

and surround themselves at all hours with the reflected light of the Divine benevolence? It were well, it should be felt throughout society, down into its humblest ranks, that the purpose of life is unaccomplished, and the designed effect of its discipline lost, if the words of the wise and the inspirations of the poet and the artist, do not constantly mingle their purer and brighter influence with the turbid flow of worldly sorrows and cares—if the spirit of beauty does not fill at times with a glow from heaven, the dark and heavy shades where myriads of the human race wear out their days.

Once more, this universe is the dwelling-place of God. It is not a silent, tenantless palace, through whose labyrinthine passages and sculptured halls we stray for a brief space between the cradle and grave —forlorn and desolate, dismayed at our own echoes, with no voice from the inner sanctuary to give an answer to our inquiries. There is One within, invisible but ever-present, who invites us to spiritual communion, and when our prayers go up to Him, responds in a shower of silent blessing on the heart. Wouldst thou extract from life all its strength of hidden peace and joy; maintain, O man, a perpetual converse with thy God. See Him in all things. Own Him as the living Presence in which thou abidest for ever. This consciousness is the only true life; and if we keep the commandments to their spirit, we shall pass into it. Nothing more is needed for the perfect happiness of man.

One solemn consideration remains. What is the end of these things? Richly as we may have ga-

thered wisdom and knowledge and enjoyment from our varied experience of the world—though the spirit of the commandments may have yielded us freely the spirit of life—the great change comes at last. We bloom, but to fade. We live, that we may die.—O Death, thou insoluble mystery, what art thou? Into what wilt thou conduct us? What strange scene does thy dark veil intercept from our view? Dost thou mercifully spare us the dizzy look into the abyss of annihilation? or art thou but a gate from the narrow womb of time into some new life of wider joy and renovated love?—There is but one reply. When the awful hour arrives, they who have most fully developed the resources of this terrestrial being, they who have extracted from it the purest elements of wisdom and happiness,—will derive from their past experience, the surest ground of hope and trust towards God. Familiarity with His thoughts and sympathy with His Spirit, will open their mental vision to the apprehension of higher verities looming on it dimly through the vastness of the Infinite. They will rely on the endless resources of the Divine Love. On retrospect, they will feel, that this mortal life, rich as it may have been in blessing and instruction, is yet an uncompleted fact;—that neither all its ends have been accomplished, nor all its powers developed, nor all its resources exhausted, nor all its loves satisfied, nor all its aspirations attained. In faith, therefore, they will look to Him whose mercies are unfailing, for the final realisation of the plan which His providence commenced, and for the fulfilment of expec-

tations which the coincidence of His moral government with tendencies by Him implanted in the soul, could not fail to inspire. The words of Christ—that last and greatest of the prophets—that authentic messenger of God—proclaim with emphatic weight the promise of immortality. His spirit imbues the soul with a higher vitality. Whosoever liveth and believeth in him—in his spirit of faith and holiness and love—shall never die.

XIII.

THE BLESSING OF SORROW.

ISAIAH, liii. 3.

"A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief."

THESE words have been understood with great unanimity as a prophetic description of Christ. More truly perhaps they are the designation of a class, of which Christ stands out as the culminating example fulfilled in him, as he fulfilled the highest prophetic function and realised the great ideal of human duty and suffering. On either view they set forth a weighty truth, and proclaim an enduring law in the moral government of God;—that they who are selected to accomplish the greatest ends of Providence, inevitably encounter in the course of action assigned them, a large amount of pain and toil and grief, which seems pure evil to the spell-bound eye of the multitude, but in its reaction on the moral nature often tends above every influence to purify and exalt it. If man be created for spiritual excellence, in spiritual excellence his true happiness must be found: and if sorrow conduce to spiritual excellence, in sorrow itself there will be a blessing. But we must guard against misconception. An important distinction is sometimes overlooked. Only such sor-

row purifies and blesses, as comes to us in the pursuit of high and noble ends, when it is the condition and attendant of moral development—not such as results from mere animal want and suffering. For this—when it is not accidental and transient—when it acts permanently on entire classes of men—is positively and directly degrading in its effect. The Economists are perfectly right, when they contend in opposition to the old doctrine of the Church, that we cannot raise the moral standard of the depressed classes, till we have first improved their social condition, and that the artificial maintenance of poverty by systematic almsgiving, is a prolific source of crime and misery and degradation.

It is not, therefore, in the stifling hold of a slave-ship—in the close and noisome garret where wretched needle-women ply early and late their ill-requited trade—in the loathsome beggary that swarms about a convent-gate—or in the mud-cabins of Irish cottiers, where swine and children sleep on the same bed and eat off the same plate—that we are to look for the spiritualising influence of privation and suffering. In many religious books there has been a great waste of unmeaning rhetoric on this topic. Man must be exempted from the craving appetites of a brute, before he can understand or even experience those sorrows of the soul which are the distinction and privilege of his higher nature. Not till we are freed from the pressing cares of the body—when healthful industry is sure of its return, and yields enough to content our frugal wants and mode-

rate desires—in the still and quiet atmosphere which then gathers round the life, is that more refined sensibility superinduced, which feels the deeper and grander sorrows of the spirit, and vibrates at the touch of outward wrong to the hidden fibres of the divine and immortal within. Those anxieties about a subsistence and the preservation of social position, which affect such extensive classes in periods of extreme civilisation, depress and relax instead of elevating and bracing the mind, and consume all the elements of a genuine heroism in sordid and cautious selfishness. The acute agony which at times convulsed society to its centre in its earliest struggles for justice and freedom, inflicted far less injury on the soul, than the low chronic malady which is silently eating away the vitals of the great cities of modern Europe. Want, anxiety, habitual discontent and hate of fancied oppression, can never raise a class and excite it to noble efforts. A new moral spirit must first pass over it, and transform the aspects of its physical suffering. It is the sorrow which draws sweetness from the affections and is hallowed by conscience—the sorrow that mingles its sanctifying drop in the cup of virtuous love and pure-souled friendship—the sorrow which mortifies young ambition and tempers presumptuous enthusiasm—the sorrow which makes us feel our weakness and inefficiency, when we have put forth earnest efforts to serve the truth and aid human progress —this is the sorrow which chastens and exalts the spirit, and fills it with a noble seriousness, and binds

it by holier ties to that ideal of perfection and blessedness, which never perishes from the trust and the aspiration of the true servants of God.

The reason of this is obvious. The sorrows which touch the heart, with such amount of outward evil as calls them into existence, take us out of the world of sense and bring us into immediate contact with the great spiritual realities which at other seasons are obscured even to virtuous men by the superior strength of present impressions.* An uninterrupted flow of worldly prosperity, even if amiably enjoyed and unstained with vice, weakens and dissolves those higher faculties of the soul which converse with things eternal and unseen—makes us too keenly sensitive to the immediate sources of our personal enjoyment and distinction—absorbs the ideal into the actual—and at last, perhaps, from sheer failure to supply any adequate excitement, lets down the soul into a stagnant depth of weariness and apathy. Taking men as they are, we should say, that the character was then placed in the most favourable circumstances for healthful development, when freed from all consuming anxiety about the means of subsistence, it was at liberty to employ a large portion of time and effort on behalf of moral and spiritual objects, without being exempted from such alternative of success and disappointment, of joy and sorrow, in the great pursuit of life, as is needed to keep the nobler sensibilities in constant exercise, and seems best to qualify the virtuous for

* Κάμνουσα ψυχὴ ἐγγύς ἐστι θεοῦ. Words traditionally ascribed to the Apostle Peter on the authority of Gregory Nazianzen.

their specific task. An earnest nature will work out for itself the true discipline of life in every sphere whether high or low. None who heartily devote themselves to the cause of truth and right, will escape the chastening influence of sorrow. Those who possess a superfluity of outward good, who are rich and honourable and highly accomplished—if they own the call of humanity, and take up with ardour and single-mindedness any one of the great questions which affect the progress of mankind—will find their experience sufficiently chequered with good and evil, and the pain and vexation of their conflict with the prejudice and the pride and the selfishness of the world, sufficiently strong—to open the deepest fountains of religious sensibility within them, and overflow their hearts with the blessing of a sacred sorrow.

Faith and conscience and love, robbed of their fitting objects within this invisible sphere, bring strength and comfort from a higher source to the exhausted soul, and fill it with a trust not of earth. It is this trust which sanctifies the sorrow and converts it into blessing.—When brave men have struggled for right and freedom, and sunk at last overpowered by a combination of the wicked—exiled and homeless, their characters traduced by the lying and the base, the cause for which they had perilled life and fame, ruined apparently for ever—is their peace all gone? Is no still small voice of blessing to be heard, amidst the mighty wail which is raised when they fall? Men of sorrow and acquainted with grief, is their nature crushed, or does it rise

and aspire with the noble consciousness of a just cause that still burns with undiminished strength in their breasts? Does nothing remain for the true-hearted patriot, which the world's calumnies and persecutions cannot take from him? Yes, one blessing with which no earthly good can compare—unshaken faith in the God of righteousness and truth—high trust in that eternal justice which must prevail, though cast down for the moment, because it is sustained by the arm of the Omnipotent. Looking back in prison or in banishment, and even amidst the anxieties of flight, on the dark field where the star of their fortunes set in blood—happy, thrice happy, are such men, when the memory of their heroic efforts, and overwhelming losses, their long torture of suspense and final agony of hopeless defeat, keeps up in full activity that ardent love of their country and their kind, and that pure spirit of self-devotion to right and truth, which prompted their sacrifices and makes their sufferings light, and leaves them still, in the very depth of worldly destitution, the holiest consolation. That glorious remembrance blending with the thought of God and the irreversible destinies of his human family, swells into a tide of generous and lofty emotion, which sweeps away the petty solicitudes of personal ambition and the galling sense of personal wrongs, and dissolves them in nobler aspirations and wider sympathies. They feel themselves servants—weak and ineffectual, but honest and faithful, servants—of Him who hath sworn by himself, that to because of humanity shall ultimately vanquish its enemies, and

triumph in the earth. As the Lord liveth, they are sure, that retribution will come, with slow and silent, but unerring, step—to re-establish justice on a firmer basis and bestow a larger freedom on mankind. The martyrs' hope consoles them, that the memory of their sufferings and the example of their heroism may descend with kindling energy on the best minds of other times, and scatter the materials of an enthusiasm in whose resistless conflagration the works of the tyrant and oppressor will be finally consumed. Misfortune cannot deprive them of the conviction, that they have co-operated, to the measure of their strength, with the purposes of the Almighty. And His purposes who shall frustrate? They draw nigh to Him in that elevating trust; and the sorrow that overshadows their hearts, sheds on them a silent blessing, which they would not exchange for the insolent joy that mingles in the triumph of unrighteous victory. If sighs escape their lips and tears suffuse their eyes—it is from no selfish grief—no fear for themselves—no want of faith in the Providence of the All-just: but it is from sympathy with fallen and suffering man—from the thought of the oppression and cruelty which still scourge the earth, of blooming fields laid waste, and towns reduced to ashes, and homes silent and desolate—of husbands, brothers, friends torn from the tender and helpless ones that clung to them for protection—of brave and virtuous men hurried prematurely from life by the hand of the executioner;—it is from remembrance of the load of guilt and wrong that must be heaved from the earth, ere free-

dom and industry can once more resume their peaceful sway. The affections break over the darkened soul at that sad prospect, in a flood of sacred sorrow, which relieves its oppression and opens a way for the returning influences of a holier faith and love.

There are sorrows that affect a more private sphere of action: and these too have their appropriate compensations. Some in every age have been found, willing for a good conscience and the love of truth, to renounce the path that led up the steep ascent of worldly honour, and to end their days in contented obscurity at its foot. We read of such things, and we give them our cold approval. Do we adequately conceive the severity of the sacrifice which they involve?—Here is a man of genius and sensibility, with a heart open to all gentle and tender affections, endowed with the tastes and accomplishments at once to enjoy and to enhance the delights of cultivated and refined society. Behold him, then, on the threshold of life—in those years when ambition is strong, and hope throws her brightest tints on the gleaming haze of the future—the world's prizes glittering in his eye—and conscious of powers that would certainly make them his own—forbidden by the voice within to engage in the dishonest race, commanded on pain of self-contempt, to stand aside and see others confessedly his inferiors rush past him to wealth and honours and the softer blessings of an easy and elegant home—with few to comprehend, and fewer still to approve, his choice. Is this a slight trial of faith and princi-

ple? Is it nothing, to see the field closed against him, for which alone he had been trained, and feels himself fit? Nothing, to be cast on the uncertainties of the outer world;—nothing, to renounce perhaps all the hopes which gave to life its dearest charm;—nothing, to be thrown amongst men with whom he has no sympathy, and to be confounded with some whose spirit is distasteful and whose principles are abhorred—the refined mixed up in the rough competitions of life with the violent and coarse, the calmly wise with the wildly visionary, the reverential and conservative with the profane and the revolutionary?—Yet such things have been bravely and cheerfully borne by the noblest spirits: and though there was sadness upon their soul—though they were truly 'men of sorrows and acquainted with grief'—there was consolation for them deep and full, of which the world little dreamed, in a heart at peace with itself and in communion with God, able to look up to Him with a filial confidence, and not afraid to ask his blessing. By a beautiful compensation of our nature, the sacrifices which are sometimes required to obtain the privilege of speaking truth and acting uprightly, exalt in the same degree the enjoyment which springs from every virtuous exercise of the faculties. Having thrown off by one noble effort, all the fetters which restrained the free action of the mind, we can now give ourselves up to the full delight of following truth wherever it leads, and of obeying to its utmost requirements the bidding of the sacred voice within. Sacrifice brings its reward, by converting simple duty into positive

happiness. We have attained our end in the liberty to work freely with God. A religious consecration invests the whole life, which keeps the idea of God ever present to the thoughts. Simply to do His will, we feel now the privilege and joy of our being. We have allied ourselves with Him; and whatever henceforth we speak and write and do, no longer extorted by fear or blindly yielded to authority, but issuing from strong conviction and impregnated with the spirit of love—will be taken up, we are sure, by his Providence, and made strong with a heavenly strength, for the overthrow of falsehood and wrong, and the gradual preparation of a reign of truth and virtue in the world. Conscious sympathy with God, conscious sympathy with the noblest spirits of the ages, joined to the hope of being associated with them hereafter in some more glorious state of being —exalt the happiness of all virtuous efforts, whatever pain and sacrifice they cost, and however void of honour in the world—and fill the depths of the soul with a sweet intensity of joy, unknown and inconceivable by those whose intellectual labours are disjoined from high spiritual feeling. Old loves, old regrets, disappointments, crosses and mortifications—memories that would darken the retrospect of other men—are here softened into beauty by the religious light that is cast over them from the now acquiescent and trustful spirit, and retain only enough of sadness to infuse a rarer flavour into the emotion they inspire, and make the sorrow that springs up in the bosom of integrity, a rich cordial to the soul.

Yes, there is a sorrow which chastens and ele-

vates the heart and betrays itself in manly seriousness of voice and look—when the grand realities of life press heavily on the thoughts—when the world's false lights disappear, and it lies before us plain and naked as it is, its infinite littleness absorbed in the awful bosom of eternity—when things invisible reveal themselves to the inward eye, and in the solemn aspect of existence which they disclose, we feel it a far happier lot to toil and suffer with the wise and virtuous few who have made truth and conscience their choice, than swim down the stream of worldly prosperity, with the vain and thoughtless crowd whose faith and worship are fixed on perishable shows;—a sorrow, grave and earnest and compassionate—in gentle unison with all that is beautiful and glorious in nature, with all that is true-hearted and noble in humanity, with all that is consoling and sublime in the aspirations of Religion: yes, this is a sorrow, which brings in its visitations the selectest influences of a better world, and leaves behind it a power of heavenly wisdom on the soul. In the shade of this divine sadness, the true prophets of humanity—'men of sorrows and acquainted with grief'—have ever dwelt—all who have had thoughts above the world, and yet have loved it with a pure and holy love—all who have striven to reform its wickedness, and abate its suffering, and animate it with juster principles and higher aims. But the sadness was dear to their hearts: they found in it a sacred peace.

If we descend into the bosom of the humblest homes, in the lights and shades which chequer the

ordinary flow of human life, we find ample scope for that holiest discipline of the heart which is administered by sorrow. Wherever sorrow comes, in the way of duty, or by the appointment of Providence for the trial of the believing and virtuous, it brings with it a blessing peculiarly its own. It is the special privilege of Religion, amidst the changes which affect our condition and interrupt our relations, that it permits us to look up to a Parent Mind, and refer ourselves to His disposal, and feel sure that He designs our good. The comfort that flows from such a belief, rich in proportion to our own need of it—is a proof from experience, weightier far than all the demonstrations of the theologian, that there *is* a Father in heaven, who dwells in our human affections and gives them their sweetness, and is ever present with the balm of his Spirit to heal their wounds. How does sorrow in all its forms, bring home this truth to the heart! A crippled and suffering child, looked at from without, seems the heaviest of domestic afflictions. Yet once confided to our care, what an object of tender interest it becomes! What gentle and holy affections hover over it! What a web of soft and fostering duty is woven round it! It gives new beauty and value to life. We would fain keep it with us for ever. What a void is left, when it is removed by the hand of death! The heart then learns the deep blessing of sorrow, ill exchanged for the drier interests and the tasteless pleasures, that must now come in its place.

There are sorrows inseparable from our choicest

blessings. In the anxieties attendant on the settlement of children in the world—in the success of one, in the failure of another, in parting with a third to distant lands—there is a fuller and more earnest play of the affections, a wider opening of the heart to the best influences, a more healthful excitement of deep moral feeling involving elements of incommunicable blessedness—than can ever be experienced in the easy and comfortable existence of self-indulgent celibacy, or even by those whose command of worldly patronage enables them to place their children at once in situations of honour and independence. Freedom from care is not identical with happiness. Apathy is the chilling blight of all true life. There can be no genuine happiness without the presence of moral and religious feeling; and this is impossible, where smooth success and luxurious ease lull all deep emotion into quietude. Who does not know, how affection is called forth by misfortune and sickness, and how it will put forth a strength and richness of blessing little suspected till it was wanted. When our friends are thrown on our help, and can make us no return but a requital of their love, there is a generous delight in serving them. We are almost thankful for the mischance which tests the purity of our attachment, and enables us to show it without a suspicion of selfishness. How doubly precious a life that is dear to us, becomes, when it no longer moves about free and independent in the midst of our social circle, but is confined to one spot, and can only be preserved from day to day by the constancy of our attentions and the

thoughtfulness of our love! It rests now as a sacred charge on us. We hold it as a pledge from the Almighty Giver, for the fidelity of our service. The affections gather with a concentrated tenderness on the single point of duty and sympathy, where active kindness belongs for the time to one side only of the relation, and no token of reciprocation can be given on the other, but the faint bowing of the head which expresses a mute thankfulness, and the tender love which still gleams momentarily from the languid eye.

It is in the solemn hour of final separation, that the affections assume their holiest aspect, and the sorrow that has done with time, finds a peace that comes from the eternal rest. Those who have experienced this last visitation of earthly sorrow, and seen the mortal breath pass from the pale lips of parent, child or friend—know well, that at such an hour, whatever faith is latent in the heart, comes forth in all its strength, and rises up to the demand of our wants, and enables us to say in the depth of heavenly trust, Father, thy will be done. Never are the beloved so dear, never so inseparable from our inmost spirit, never can we so little conceive the possibility of their perishing from us for ever—as in the moment when death throws his dark veil between us and them, and faith glows into intensity under the breath of affection. Never as then is this life so completely a nothing, and death a transient passage, and heaven the one only reality.

Christianity in the highest sense is the Religion of Sorrow. It baptizes the heart with a holy sad-

ness, and prepares it for the descent of the Spirit of God. Christ leads us on to perfection as 'a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.' Gethsemane and Calvary are the scenes where he teaches us most effectually the necessity of life's struggles and the secret of its consolations. All that concerns the interests of the present life, we can learn for ourselves, and from those with whom we daily live. Science and human experience suffice for this. What we need is the higher discipline that will convert pain and toil, and grief and disappointment, and death into blessings for the soul—blessings of unearthly sweetness and a virtue which nothing can touch, subsisting through every change into the eternal life. This discipline we learn from him who has consecrated sorrow and made death beautiful. The suffering Christ is the best supporter of the heart that is bowed with grief. He passed through all the crises of our humanity, even our doubts and our fears, and fathomed the darkest depths of our sorrow. But the fear was momentary; the doubt only rose to pass away. Fear and doubt were alike dissolved in the warmth of that human love, which prayed for enemies, and comforted the penitent, and consigned the weeping mother to the tried affection of the friend:—fear and doubt passed away in the clear visions of that heavenly trust which spake forth triumphant in the words—'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.'

XIV.

MORE JUSTICE AND LESS CHARITY.

MATTHEW, vii. 12.

"All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the Law and the Prophets."

THIS is one of those grand, universal commandments, written by God's finger on the conscience of all men—of which it is the singular distinction, to be every where admitted and every where disobeyed. It is so obviously essential to the order and harmony of the world, that no sophistry is shameless enough to dispute it. Its fulfilment is hindered by so many weaknesses and thwarted by so many impulses which the best cannot wholly overcome, that every one must feel on reviewing any considerable portion of his existence, how constantly he has violated it. It is a protest against selfishness: and selfishness, cleaving as it does to the inmost core of our being, is the besetting sin of the world. It is, further, one of those commandments, the keeping of which to the outward letter, without reference to the inward and governing spirit, would often be productive of the greatest mischief. To treat others properly, we are told to put ourselves in their situation, and to imagine how in that case we should wish them to act

towards us. But to obtain a right judgment, something more than a mere change of places is required. We must take with us into the new circumstances, a correct estimate of the mutual obligations of mankind. Undue susceptibility and the preponderance of mere feeling over thoughtfulness may equally mislead us, whether we look at the case from another's point of view or from our own. The question is, not what we might actually wish with our present views, but what with juster views we ought to wish. It is not enough simply to conceive ourselves in the position of others; we have also to consider how, when there, it would be our duty to feel and act towards them, if removed to ours.

A certain degree of moral culture, therefore, must be pre-supposed, apprehending the general spirit of the precept—to enable us to use it as a clear and certain rule in our intercourse with mankind. Like most of Christ's precepts, it is designed for strength of impression and readiness of application. It is thrown off with an unqualified breadth and generality of statement, and left to find its practical limits in the subsequent reflection and experience of the recipient mind. It is a popular, not a scientific, enunciation of a great general truth. Nevertheless it seizes with the sort of intuitive tact and subtle depth of penetration, which we ever remark in the oracles of a true prophet—precisely that element of selfishness in the mind, which deadens its clear perception of the full claims of social duty. Our daily sins against the Christian law of equity and love, have their source in an habitual want of sympathy

with others. We think too much of ourselves. We look at all things too exclusively from our own point of view, and clothe them in the light of our personal interests and affections. To place ourselves where others are, if it does not at once disclose to us the true measure and whole extent of our obligations, at least removes the chief obstacle to our discernment of them. If you can but dissolve the blinding mists of selfishness, and let the warm, genial influences of a kindly heart have free access to the world without, and reveal its many claims upon us in the broad sunshine of human sympathy,—reason will easily supply the needful cautions and limitations. Its vision, now unobstructed and free, will perceive without difficulty, what the true interest of others demands, and what we ourselves with the same enlightenment in their situation would wish them to do to us. Reason must guide the impulses of the heart: but reason would never act at all, and have no materials with which to deal—unless impulses first came to it from the heart; and it is these impulses which are cherished and administered by Religion. The precept in the text does not meet all the requirements of the ethical philosopher; but it enjoins the preservation of that preliminary state of moral feeling—that breadth and openness and promptitude of human sympathy—which is the condition of a clear apprehension of all the demands of justice between man and man. On the consistent maintenance of this justice, far more than on the misplaced charity which is too often made its substitute, I shall now endeavour to show, that the tranquil progress of so-

ciety and the true interest of every class mainly depend.

What we ought to desire as the supreme good for ourselves, we ought also, in the spirit of this Christian precept, to desire for all our fellow-men—and that is, the highest development of moral character—the true life of God—proportionate to the gift which each individual has received, and the opportunities with which he is surrounded. This is the sole condition of a genuine worth and blessedness. Only in living thus, does man attain the end for which he was created, and fulfil the destined perfection of his being. Now, this highest good—apart from which all others are valueless—cannot be put *into* a man; it must come *out* of him. If you attempt to give, what can only proceed from within—you may weaken, or even extinguish, the only possible means of its development. The good which makes man in himself, brave, noble, wise, blessed and free—must be evolved from personal effort—must be won in the resolute mastery of evil and difficulty, in the laborious pursuit and manly achievement of excellence—must be the fruit of earnest self-culture and self-development. A true man can only be produced under such conditions. Any influence, under however friendly an aspect it may be offered, which enfeebles the stimulus to exertion and abridges the power of self-dependence, perils his dearest interests, and eats away the living root of character. For the fullest display of this principle of self-development in the individual, justice is the grand pre-requisite of social intercourse.

It makes every man secure within his own sphere of action; protects him against intrusion from without; and leaves him free and undisturbed to work out his own conception of duty, and follow his proper business of self-culture. It teaches him to know his own limits, and respect those of his neighbour.

In working out, then, my own emancipation from difficulty, whether of mind or of circumstances —in striving after the attainment of social respectability and independence, and increased opportunities of intellectual cultivation—in one word, after all those outward means which I perceive are the conditions of the highest moral and spiritual good —I must be careful not to exceed the boundaries with which Providence has marked off the portion of this world's surface assigned to me; I must be satisfied with the power and resources contained within it: and I must not, to increase my individual riches, enter my neighbour's field, and rob him of his. This is justice; and what I observe towards others, I may reasonably expect them to observe towards me. On the other hand, when I see extensive classes of men surrounded with difficulty, and sternly grappling with toil—my first feeling, excited by contrast with situations apparently more favoured, and prompted by a natural tenderness of heart, would probably be this: 'Were I in the situation of these men, how I should thank any compassionate friend, who would step in and deliver me from this incessant toil, and give me a little rest and ease!

What I in their circumstances should wish for myself, ought not I to endeavour to procure for them?' Such is often the spontaneous suggestion of unreflecting benevolence; and under such feelings, it has not unfrequently proceeded to act. But if we watch the process to the end, we observe that integrity and perseverance usually triumph at last over all their obstacles, and carry away a glorious result of manly hardihood and sturdy self-reliance. A graver question, therefore, remains behind the hasty impulse of natural kind-heartedness. Can it be right to relieve the physical wants of men, at the expense of weakening their moral energies and their sense of self-respect? Is it the higher or the lower part of my own nature, which thus sympathises with diminished exertion and responsibility, and would so far extinguish the noblest functions of humanity, and take away the condition of its truest worth? Distinctly realising to myself the known consequences of such treatment, and seeing how it tends to degrade and pauperise the minds subjected to it—can I honestly say, that, with situations reversed, I should desire others to act towards me, as I under the influence of a weak sentimentality, am disposed to act towards them?—I am not arguing against the occasional and thoughtful exercise of direct beneficence, still less, contending for the infliction of gratuitous hardship. I would merely lay down the broad principle—that to do as we would be done by, becomes then only a safe rule of social intercourse, and puts truly in practice the great idea of human brotherhood, when we do not surrender our-

selves to the impulses of undisciplined feelings, but keep the value of an immortal soul and the end of human life distinctly in view. There is no more flagrant violation of the spirit of this divine precept, than to permit, much more to encourage, the existence of a class, lost to all feeling of self-respect, dead to every motive of self-maintenance, and dependent for its subsistence from day to day, on the voluntary or compulsory alms of other classes.

It is not without an ominous significance, that what is called Socialism, makes its appearance amongst the great movements of the present age. All who look into the future with any power of moral divination, must perceive, that vast social questions—questions that go to the very heart of social organisation, and may involve an extensive re-adjustment of the relations of classes—must sooner or later mix themselves with the political and ecclesiastical controversies which once exclusively agitated the public mind, and give new prominence to the feelings and interests of myriads who are beginning to unite with the undiminished toil and hardship of former centuries, the intelligence which is peculiar to this. It can hardly be questioned, that we are as yet only in the rudiments of the great science of Society. That there is widespread error somewhere—in our principles or in our application of them—in the ruling maxims of governments or in the relations of social intercourse—is evident from the half-smothered restlessness and discontent which are ready at this moment to burst out into a flame over one half of Europe. The organic

law seems yet hidden from us, that would re-construct the social chaos, and bind together its warring elements in order and harmony. On this vital point inquiries in every direction must henceforth converge. Here must centre for mutual enlargement and correction, the lessons of history, the deductions of theory, and the results of experience. It is easy to point to what is evil and threatening. Who will propose a comprehensive remedy, that meets the manifold difficulties of this complicated case? Perhaps, in the first instance, we look too far and too wide. We neglect the faithful application of simple principles. We overlook the wisdom that is shut up in every man's own conscience. This is certain; nothing can be done without a recurrence before every thing else to strict justice in all the departments of human intercourse.

Hitherto, it has been the usual effect of civilisation, to accumulate enormous masses of private wealth by the side of dark depths of abject poverty, and to bring the extreme grades of society into the unhappy relationship of a class which enjoys without exertion every thing which art and industry can bestow, and a class which has nothing but the miserable dole which it accepts from charity. Mistaken views of Religion consecrate this relationship, and would fain perpetuate it. They teach men to look on it as the normal and permanent condition of society. They foster the absurd and very presumptuous notion, that the dependent and necessitous ought always to exist, if only to afford an object for the sentimentalities and alms of the rich. There is

an unchristian pride in the very assumption which such views imply. Put forth in the name, they are at war with the spirit, of the Gospel. To give largely, where the means are large, and where no personal sacrifice is incurred, may not rise above the questionable merit of non-resistance to the strong impulse of a compassionate instinct: and where beneficence assumes the form of lordly almsgiving or profuse hospitality, it may be so deeply blended with a consciousness of superiority and the inward flattery of self-applause, that possibly in no other circumstances are the humanities of life less felt and the spirit of Christian brotherhood more completely extinct. I am far from underrating the genuine munificence which flows from a large and noble heart, which aims at morally elevating the objects of its sympathy, and measures all its outgoings by a thoughtful reference to that end. And yet, perhaps, the purest love of man may be shown, where there is absolutely nothing to give. To embrace the world into whose lap we have been thrown, lovingly—to take our part earnestly and hopefully in its joint labours and generous emulations, without envy and without contempt, without greedy encroachment or selfish repining—heartily rejoicing to promote all that is good—knowing our proper vocation, content with our appointed place, and cultivating faithfully the talent, whatever it be, that God has entrusted to us—this is a severer test and a surer witness of the true Christian spirit, than the unreflecting dispersion of treasures whose loss is not felt and can be easily replaced. This calls out more strong-

ly the healthful consciousness, that we are all men, and born for our specific task — bound together as fellow-workers by a common tie of human brotherhood. This is that true justice which is identical with the spirit of an enlarged charity. This is, in the highest sense, doing as we would be done by. It is what our Lord called it—the Law and the Prophets—the sum and substance of practical Religion.

The world unfortunately has chosen to pursue an opposite course. The spirit of injustice is abroad—at work in our laws, our institutions, our manners, and our opinions. We first sin by wholesale against each other's rights; and when crime, poverty, wretchedness and discontent are the result, a bustling, ostentatious charity steps in to resist it and set matters right. Nor is the injustice less certain or less pernicious, because thousands perpetrate it unconsciously, walking without thought in the evil courses traced out for them by their fathers. Our many iniquities in small things scatter broadcast the seeds of innumerable evils. Our selfish indolence and indifference allow enormous abuses to grow to a head, and immense classes to lapse into a heathenish barbarism:—and then we try to stem the rushing torrent by expedients which reach not its source, and which if they do not increase its violence, only turn it into a new direction and spread it over a wider surface. The word must be spoken: we want more justice, and less charity. In proof of our national benevolence, we point exultingly to our endless eleemosynary institutions, and we say—'Be-

hold the monuments of our charity! What sorrow of humanity is left unredressed in this Christian land?' But that such things should be necessary at all, and still more that there should be increasing demand for them—is in reality less an honour to our Christianity, than a reflection upon it; for they prove, that there exists somewhere a gross violation or neglect of social duty. What we need, is the development of a higher philanthropy that is superior to mere passive impression, and aims with wise and energetic forethought at putting all men in a condition, and furnishing them with a stimulus, to raise and improve themselves—to become self-sustaining and self-dependent. At present, the individual is often crushed by circumstances. He cannot rise, if he would. There is the force of hostile masses acting against him, which his single energy cannot overcome. We must endeavour to heave the burden off his shoulders, and give expansion to his latent powers.

The question will be asked, what can the State accomplish—what can private benevolence effect—in furtherance of this object? We have been taught to expect too much from laws and government; and what they can give, we often look for through a wrong medium—through wide, organic change. Let us profit by experience. Where such change has been made, to the utmost extent which sanguine theorists could desire—what has been the fruit? In what respect are the millions easier and happier than they were before?—The well-being of a community results from the joint influence of innumer-

able causes operating through many generations, and can never flow from the simple effect of one great change, however necessary or successful. Forms of government are historical growths, with principles latent in them, no doubt, that must be more and more developed in accordance with enlightened theory; but under any circumstances, their value consists less in what they can directly do for men, than in what they allow and encourage men to do for themselves. They are rather the conditions, than the causes of social prosperity. Taking what exists, therefore, and is in harmony with our national character and traditional institutions, as a basis of action, let us turn to practical possibilities that lie within our reach. Let our first demand be the application of the simple rule of Christian justice to all affairs of State, producing throughout society the profound contentment of a conviction, that the interests of every class, however humble and obscure, are duly felt and acknowledged, and protected with as jealous a care as those of the most distinguished and powerful.

Under this general provision, three objects seem alone of sufficient importance to require a special mention.—(1.) The elevation of the lowest class and the extinction of pauperism must be promoted by every stimulus that can be given to industry, and by offering facilities for the accumulation and investment of property in small masses. It is an alarming symptom, when wealth is viewed by multitudes as an injurious monopoly. Wealth should be widely ramified through all classes; and the feel-

ing of envy will then cease. For this purpose, let industry be released from its remaining fetters; that in the great equilibrium of demand and supply that must ultimately establish itself over the whole earth, employment may steadily continue with as much uniformity, as it is possible for any institution affected by human contingencies to obtain. Let government take away all artificial inducements to the confinement of large amounts of property in a few hands, and render its conveyance inexpensive and secure. Let every opportunity be afforded for the conversion of earnings into capital, that the hostile interests which now exist, may be gradually extinguished, and the two classes of capitalists and workmen pass off by imperceptible degrees into each other. This would only be the introduction of an intermediate grade in manufacturing society, similar to that which the yeoman once occupied on the soil between the labourer and the gentleman.*—(2.) Let universal education, by whatever means and on whatever conditions the present state of society may render its attainment practicable—provide for

* 'The yeoman'—says Fuller, with characteristic quaintness—'is a gentleman in ore, whom the next age may see refined; and is the wax capable of a gentle impression, when the prince shall stamp it. Wise Solon would surely have pronounced the English yeomanry a fortunate condition, living in the temperate zone, betwixt greatness and want, an estate of people almost peculiar to England. France and Italy are like a die, which hath no points between six and ace, nobility and peasantry. In England the temple of honour is bolted against none who have passed through the temple of virtue; nor is a capacity to be genteel denied to our yeoman who thus behaves himself.' —*The Holy State*, B. II. ch. xviii.

the mind of every class, what free industry procures for the body—the nourishment that is needful to its growth—such a free development of the faculties by the infusion of wholesome instruction, as will fix the principles and settle the character on a moral and religious basis.—(3.) Let the principle of self-government be so distributed through all the elements of social organisation, that some individuals of every class may have the opportunity of taking part in local administration, and so diffuse through the body of the people a strong and binding sense of common interest.—Such is, perhaps, the utmost that the State can accomplish, to aid the free growth and independent development of the mass of the population.

Private influence is less marked and less thought of; but it is more penetrating and more diffusive. Politics and Political Economy have done much to put the old-fashioned notions of morals out of countenance. Some theorists are so enlightened as to have given up all belief in a conscience. An Economical School is hardly yet extinct, which made wealth of such importance, and so completely identified with it the whole value and significance of human life, that people might well suppose, they had done all which could be reasonably demanded of them, when they had increased to the utmost the amount of annual production. Prejudices like these have lowered the moral tone of public opinion. The possessor of an improvable nature and an immortal soul, has been lost sight of in the calculations which reckoned him as an unit of so much political influ-

ence or industrial power. It is consolatory to observe, that these narrow views are on the decline. It is now seen, that they include only a part of the conditions which enter into the great social problem. Everywhere men are awakening to a juster sense of their claims on each other. The relation of an employer to his workpeople, for instance, is admitted now to involve moral as well as economical considerations. It is felt to be a trust of vast influence for good or for evil; and for his use of it, the holder is deemed amenable to public opinion and responsible to God. It is a relation which honour, kindness, humanity, the strictest justice—should consecrate and make fruitful of blessing to the two parties which it unites. In the hurry and eagerness of selfish competition, we underrate the silent influence of moral character. A high example of fairness and integrity goes a long way in satisfying and tranquillising the popular mind. It inspires respect, awakens moral sympathy, and predisposes to concessions even where they are seen to draw sacrifices after them. On the other hand, meanness, trickery, harshness, oppression—rouse the inner man into suspicion and hostility—instil the poisonous drops which turn the native sweetness of humanity into bitter gall, and confound in one deep, dark, smouldering passion of indiscriminate hate, the just and the unjust of the entire class which its own evil members have thus wickedly made odious.

When will men trust more to moral qualities than to the magic of gold, for their weight in society

and their influence over the classes which they desire to control? There are some whom the prospect of a small additional gain tempts irresistibly to push an opportunity to the utmost, yea to the very verge of dishonesty, against those whom circumstances have brought under their power. Does it never occur to such men to contrast with this pitiful advantage, the superior comfort of living in conscious security, — honoured and respected in the midst of thousands who trust their word and rely on their justice, and look up to them as the dispensers of an employment which nourishes from its fair remuneration a wide community of comfortable and contented homes?—A redundant population reduces the value of labour, and enables the employer to engage it at wages which barely suffice for the minimum of subsistence. And if the constant extension of trade and a monopoly of the markets of the world be thought the only criterion of national prosperity —such a condition of the labouring class may seem necessary and even advantageous. But if it pours in gains on one side, it draws off expenditure in equal measure on the other. It burdens capital with the heavy charge of pauperism, and encircles civilisation with anxiety and fear. A population exceeding the demands of adequate employment, tends from the sheer effect of misery, to perpetuate itself with steady increase, and to become continually more and more degraded. Smaller profits and the slower accumulation of large fortunes—if such be the only means of checking so frightful a state of things—would be richly compensated in the view

of every thoughtful man, by a profounder feeling of safety and the sight of more contentment and happiness. Indeed, no efforts and no sacrifices could be too great to relieve society from the load with which pauperism oppresses it, and to rouse the masses by every stimulus that can be applied to them, by every help and encouragement from their superiors in worldly position—to a vigorous struggle for self-deliverance and self-renovation.

The enlightened and benevolent head of a large establishment which furnishes employment to hundreds, has means and opportunities of moral influence at his disposal—the more effectual, because they are indirect and grow out of the real business of life—which the theoretical philanthropist cannot command, and may well envy. Yet there are cases where such means are abused, and such opportunities are neglected, by men who rush with hypocritical inconsistency after remote and fantastic objects for the display of their benevolence. What God offers them they reject; and then run over half the world, to make a duty for themselves. They will harass, oppress, browbeat, trample down and crush some poor and helpless wretch whom fortune has thrown at their feet, and whom a small remission of their hard-wrung gains might have filled with heart and hope to resume once more the steep ascent to decency and comfort;—and then, when conscience smites them, roused, it may be, by the stimulating fanaticism of the pulpit, they will compound for these daily, deep-penetrating sins by some splendid contribution to an intolerant association, or profuse

demonstration of zeal for philanthropy at the antipodes. These are the fatal courses which foster misery and pauperism, and substitute a show of charity for the substance of justice. Let thoughtful men awake to the full consciousness of their Christian duty—not to give more—but by their example, their influence, their encouragement, their friendly intercourse and wise advice, to put the suffering and dependent classes in a condition to demand less. Let them strive to lift up the many, who are now almost slaves under the imperious domination of capital—to the rank of friends and fellow workers, independent citizens and Christian brethren.

For this object no subversion of existing relations and no violent fusion of classes is necessary. Let society freely unfold itself in its many-sided fulness, and in the graduated order which results from the spontaneous workings of nature;—law simply providing, that one class shall not encroach upon and oppress another, that the few shall not rob the many, nor the many tyrannise over the few. What is wanted is a sense of mutual dependence and the feeling of mutual respect between all classes. No class would suffer more from the attempt to equalise all social distinctions, than the lowest. The motive to rise would be taken from themselves, and those now above them, would be drawn down to their level. The great principle of 'doing to others as we would they should do to us,' so far from being violated, is in its spirit applied and enforced by the preservation in the upper ranks, of the highest possible standard of manners, refinement, mental culture and

moral principle. Such an example diffuses a feeling which checks barbarism and coarseness in the subordinate grades of life; and when every artificial obstacle is removed, and a general impulse to self-development is excited, holds out to superior minds in the humblest sphere, a standard of excellence after which to aspire. It is the condition of a thorough elevation of tone throughout society, that all should have access to this highest circle, who can prove their qualification for it. It should be kept select only by the exclusion of rudeness, ignorance and profligacy. None should be shut out by the impassable barriers of caste; none pronounced inadmissible, in consequence of their religious persuasion. Education should be so widely spread—all the avenues to merit should be so freely opened—the motives to exertion should be so universally diffused—that the seed of genius may be quickened into life wherever it is hid, and noble spirits rise with unobstructed course from the lowliest origin to the distant eminence where nature intended them to reign. Thus all the elements of good would ascend like a genial exhalation and gather round the summit of society, at once clothing it with radiant glory, and dropping freshness and strength on the broad expanded slopes below.

XV.

SIMPLICITY OF HEART.

ROMANS, x. 10.

"With the heart man believeth unto righteousness."

THESE words express the fundamental idea of Christianity—that faith is a condition of the affections, yielding the fruits of a holy and upright life. It is with the heart that man believeth; and the issue is righteousness and acceptance with God. The great distinction of the Gospel, is the inwardness of its morality. Whatever men show to the world in speech or act, takes its quality in the Christian view from the state of mind out of which it proceeds. In the science of ethics, as a discipline for the outward life, the heathen schools have left us nothing to accomplish. Every speculative question has been anticipated and exhausted by them. What they wanted, was the motive power—the vital link connecting will with affection. This is furnished by the religion of the prophet of Nazareth. The philosophies of antiquity addressed themselves to the intellect; the simple words of Jesus lay hold of the heart. How unlike are the Christians of the first century to the many acute and accomplished men who frequented the court of the Cæsars! How strikingly different,

for example, are the fervour, simplicity and zeal of the chosen and separated few who listened to the teachings of Paul or John, and all whose virtues were the spontaneous outgoing of a trustful and loving heart, from the cold and artificial but exquisitely polished intellect of Seneca! We may be unjust to both parties, if we estimate them from the wrong point of view. In clearness of ideas, in precision of language, in all that results from scientific culture of mind, the heathens have immeasurably the advantage. But for access to the deepest sources of human feeling—for vivid apprehension of spiritual realities—for intimacy with the most hidden operations of conscience—for a quick, intuitive sense of the invisible workings of God—we recognise a power and an insight in the early Christians, which fill the mind with wonder approaching to awe, and stand out in marked and significant contrast with the limitation of their knowledge, the unskilfulness of their reasoning, and their uncritical and infantine credulity. Tried by a purely intellectual standard, the first professors of our faith would run the risk of being repudiated as ignorant enthusiasts. Brought to the inner test of moral and religious feeling, the hollow rhetoric of the courtly sophist repels all cordial sympathy. The sentence in each case depends on the temper of the judge. Gibbon would doubtless hold up Seneca in advantageous comparison with Polycarp or Clement. George Fox and Bunyan would as surely turn away unsatisfied from the pointed antithesis and elaborate ingenuity of the preceptor of Nero, to seek a more congenial nutri-

ment in the deep truth and earnest faith and strong affection which still glow with a vital heat in every relic of the apostolic age.

Christianity has reversed the judgments of mankind respecting the order and subordination of the constituent elements of our nature—placing first and foremost the conscience and affections as subjected to the sovereign law of duty, and ranking under them the knowing and reasoning faculties as designed for the search after truth. Moral light must be intermingled with intellectual light, to conduct us safely through our mortal course. For 'if the light that is in thee, be darkness'—as infallibly it must, where moral considerations are absent—'how great is that darkness!' But the due relation of these two powers—the moral and the intellectual—it is not always so easy to preserve. The doctrine affirmed in the text, is often misunderstood. Churches still exist, where feeling is allowed to overpower reason, and on pretence of religious grounds all intellectual freedom and activity are forbidden. When reaction comes with the rise of a spirit of inquiry, men are thrown into the opposite extreme, and begin to exalt reason above feeling. They become hard, captious and self-opinionated. It is all at once the fashion to affect independence and originality of mind. Nothing is now heard of but the rights of intellect. Hence the growth of a popular cant, rapidly propagated from mouth to mouth. For cant is the adoption of some notion at second-hand and the bustling promulgation of it, without any corresponding depth and steadiness of conviction. It

is forgotten, that the number of those who can really strike out new and original ideas, ever has been, and ever must be, exceedingly small.

Tendencies of this description pervade at the present time to a large extent, the younger portion of society. There is amongst them a great distrust of old dogmas; a weariness of all established usage; a feverish thirst for novelty as such; and with the growth of an earnest spirit, conscious of many and great evils that oppress the world, a precipitate eagerness, not wholly inexcusable, to catch at every specious theory that promises to relieve them. But the good that exists in such tendencies, readily turns into evil. Complaint and scepticism, mixed with some presumption, infect the public sentiment.—Original intellects waste their strength in profuse wailing and unmeasured contempt. Inferior minds take up the strain, and scorn to use the old phrases and believe the old truths. They strangely set up for originals, by slavishly squaring their modes of thought and their very forms of speech to the pattern prescribed for them by some idolized authority. They assume a mission from heaven to regenerate the old world, and prove their fitness for it by despising everybody and abusing everything. On all who do not embrace their views and swear by their oracle, they look down with ineffable disdain, as very ordinary and ignorant people, scarce worthy of notice and not deserving a refutation. It is their folly to affect originality at any cost. Nothing more deeply offends them, than the imputation of the common-place. Our popular literature has not es-

caped the contagion. The simplest truths cannot be expressed in a simple way. Good taste is despised as a sign of mediocrity. Good manners are ridiculed as a weak concession to conventionalism. Good sense is spurned as incompatible with original strength of intellect. Exaggeration, coarseness, false and monstrous sentiment, pompous obscurity of phrase that hides meanness of conception under an air of profundity, and an incessant straining after novelty that often destroys at one blow simple truth and pure English—are mistaken by numbers for the tokens of genius, and hailed as indications of the approaching millennium, when all the littleness and prejudice of the past shall be thrown aside, and a new and more glorious career open before the emancipated soul.

True originality of mind cannot be too highly estimated, whatever form it may assume; nor can the undoubted prerogative of real genius ever be disputed, to soar in its own strength, to use its own speech, and to walk in its own ways. For one grain of the pure gold of genius, we might well put up with much that is coarse and valueless in the matter which holds it. But what we have a right to protest against, is the assumption of genius where it does not exist; the affectation of originality in very ordinary minds; the repudiation of the commonplace in characters which only assert their claim to it by disregarding common-sense and violating common decorum. Even genius has no chartered license to wander away from the eternal landmarks of morality, and the safe guidings of traditional pro-

priety. Much more, then, will the vast residue of mankind find their only safety and their genuine respectability in cultivating simplicity of heart, in adhering to the dictates of a healthy moral sentiment, in fulfilling patiently and earnestly the duties that lie next to them, in their allotted sphere of action and sympathy. True wisdom is to 'believe with the heart unto righteousness;' in other words, to love and cherish purity and uprightness for their own sakes—to believe in them entirely—to speak and act in them undoubtedly—and to make the outward so fully express the inward man, that both may be approved to the omniscient eye of God. No character formed on such principles, can be common-place. It will fill its appointed station; wear its proper aspect; do its fitting work; and be noble and beautiful in its way. Such is the charm and the worth of genuine simplicity of character. Observe the economy of nature. Every thing is beautiful, if left where nature meant it to be. Mark the variegated hues that spread with exquisite transition from the unbroken surface of the precipitous rock across the slope of the brown heath into the green bosom of the undulating vale. See how they all blend in richest harmony, and yield a soft diffusive beauty, to which the minutest lichen and the tenderest blade of grass and the most delicate flower, not less than the massive shade of the forest and the bright expanse of winding stream, contribute their share. Compare this spontaneous loveliness with the contorted forms and elaborate patchwork of the artificial grotto, where knotted roots and

dried flowers and pebbles and moss are wrought into fantastic mosaic;—and you will perceive how studied efforts at originality mar the beauty that grows out of the simplicity of nature. Let not man then overlook this great lesson of nature. Let him be content to be what he is, and where he is, in the grand simplicity of the divine plan: and his character will always be beautiful. It will give its due share of colour and sweetness to the pervading harmonies of creation. Nay, if a seed of power be actually within it, and the order of the Divine influences be obediently followed, it may put forth higher qualities, and assume a more striking aspect, and become, when God demands it, at the fitting season, original and great.

The apostolic doctrine is brought out in the text by the peculiar significance and mutual relation of three prominent terms—heart, belief, righteousness. Righteousness is the state of mind and character which makes us acceptable to God. Belief implies the principles which form and govern the character. Heart expresses the feelings of love and interest with which those principles are adopted and acted on. Simplicity and heartiness are the feelings here described—simplicity looking to what is purely right, heartiness taking it up with earnestness and devotion. Let every character cultivate these qualities. There will then be no fear of the commonplace; and society will be rid of affectation and pretence. What a charm there is about the person who is content to appear what he really is, and to fill his proper place in the world without envy or

contempt! There is a serene truthfulness in his whole manner and language, which wins our confidence and puts us at our ease. Through his transparent words we can see into the feelings that are at work in the bottom of his heart. There is a beauty which a pure moral taste will at once discern in the adaptation of such a character to its circumstances — in the mutual correspondence of its relations and its affections—in its quiet harmony with the order and arrangements of Providence. We perceive at a glance what a grace and even a dignity, genuine simplicity of mind and quiet rectitude of purpose confer on characters, that are not made conspicuous either by elevated station or brilliancy of endowment.

Heart and conscience require indeed the support and guidance of the undertaking. But wherever the former are fully awakened and exert a predominant sway, they impose the duty of calling forth and cultivating to the utmost the intellectual faculties as the means and instruments of wisdom. Moral and spiritual affections never unfold themselves without some corresponding development of intelligence; but the intellectual powers may be exercised, to the neglect and stifling of the moral and spiritual. When these are ascendant in the character, they rouse the intellect to healthful action, and impel it in the right direction, without letting it wander astray in pursuit of mischievous or delusive objects. Many a mind is urged by ambition and vanity and envy to enterprises beyond its strength, which only lead to abortive efforts and terminate in

disappointment and misery. Whereas simplicity of heart will reveal to us the one talent (if it be no more) that has been confided to our charge, and incite us to cultivate it with religious faithfulness. What is inherent in the character and constitutes its specific gift, will then be sure to come out and do its work, and occupy a place in the economy of providence, which no other character perhaps under the same circumstances could so beneficially fill. It is no groundless assumption, that to every character its fitting position and appropriate function have been assigned in the grand arrangements of omniscient wisdom—subject of course to man's upright and intelligent exercise of the free agency entrusted to him; for this alone will show him what his true vocation is, and enable him to appropriate it. We miss the duty that belongs to us, for want of simplicity of mind—from ignorance of ourselves, and a restless ambition to be what we are not.

Seek out, then, the work which God intended for thee; fulfil it earnestly and faithfully; and thou wilt be honoured and blest. To find it, thou must not cast an envious eye at the lofty and glittering pinnacles of this world's greatness. Look rather within. Consult thy own heart. Listen to the voice of conscience. Ponder well the ever-recurring suggestions of thy calm and serious moments. Behold where God has placed thee. Examine dispassionately what he has given to thee without and within. Ask thyself what good can be done—what evil averted—what knowledge acquired—what truth sought after—what happiness diffused—in that little

circle which bounds in thy present being. Fill it up to its limits, with earnest, faithful duty—with pure and reverent love; and its circumference will gradually expand, and a new horizon will widen round thee. If God has buried a richer talent within thee, and has nobler work for thee here to do, his hand will bear thee upward to a higher stage and cause thee to move in a larger sphere. Thou wilt be spared a fall from the giddy heights of a treacherous ambition; for thy way will be secured beneath thee; and thy power at every step will be equal to thy aspiration.

Genius is a rare gift. Its visits to earth are 'few and far between.' For the multitude of men, it is unspeakable presumption, to affect its prerogatives and claim its privileges. Yet, if there be any asignable process to draw it forth, where it may lie hidden and oppressed—if there be any method to give it a deeper and holier influence on the hearts and minds of men; it is the expulsion of the affectation and prejudice which buoy up such numbers with chimerical hopes, and lead them astray from real duties in the chase of phantoms—it is the infusion into society of more reverence and love for simplicity and genuineness of character. It should be the first object of education, to form a pure heart, high principle, an earnest and ingenuous spirit. If all intellectual accomplishments be kept subordinate to these great moral ends, and the development of the character be allowed to follow the beneficent order of nature; the various tendencies and aptitudes of different minds will unfold themselves in their pe-

culiar strength, and enrich with new elements the spiritual resources of the world. At present innumerable prejudices obstruct in various ways a complete extraction of the mental and moral wealth latent in society. They can only be dispelled by a profounder respect for all honest labour, and a more discriminating regard in our social economy to the fitness of different minds for different works. Original diversities of spiritual organization have not been sufficiently considered in our prevalent modes of culture. We have subjected all minds to one system, and do not leave free scope for the unfolding of the simple, earnest, devoted character. The principle of the division of labour, to which so much of our existing civilization is due, must ultimately have some reference to the inherent tastes and capacities of various minds. But a false estimate of respectability—the assumption, that only certain kinds of employment are genteel and honourable—has narrowed for thousands their sphere of useful activity in the world, and limited in a correspondent degree their course of preparatory education. We can only hope, that freedom and progress will rectify these mistakes, and by removing the constraint of artificial pressure, give full expansion to the diversity of nature's gifts.

It may not indeed be literally true, that every mind brings with it into the world a special vocation from Providence. Some minds command circumstances ; others are rather moulded by them ; though in every case, there is more of reaction between mind and circumstance than a superficial view would

indicate. Fourier in his theory of social regeneration, has doubtless carried to an absurd and impracticable extent, the notion of adjusting employment to aptitude, and of fitting to every outward function in life its exact counterpart of mental organisation. His whole conception of the subject is too necessarian, and by reducing to a minimum the principle of human freedom and self-development, transfers to society what should be the work of the individual. Still a great and fruitful idea dimly pervades his eccentric speculations; and it is this obscure mixture of truth with error, which lends them a delusive fascination. The error we are not bound to accept; but truth from whatever quarter we may cordially greet. When moral considerations shall take precedence of all others in education—when a simple, truthful, earnest mind shall be regarded as its worthiest fruit—the predominance of duty in the view of life and a thoughtful comparison of fitnesses within with claims and opportunities without, will sufficiently make clear to every one, where duty lies and how it must be performed, and effect that vital harmony of the mind with its circumstances, which is the condition of the most productive labour, the means of evolving the largest amount of intellectual force and originality, and the most fertile source of happiness.

Do you suspect within yourself the latent instinct of genius? Break not away from the clearly-defined path of duty. Be true to the spiritual monitor within. Know that wherever true genius lurks, it will reveal itself most effectually in harmony with

the suggestions of your moral nature—that pride, envy, sensuality, hard and cynical unbelief must waste its oil and finally quench its flame. Strive to be a simple, honest, faithful man: whatever hidden talent you possess, will then come forth in its genuineness, and exert all its power. Every success you could reasonably desire, will be surely yours; and the bitterest mortification that might else await you, you will happily be spared. You may not be distinguished, but you will escape disappointment. You may lose a temporary notoriety which you would not have deserved; but you will secure that inward peace and dignity of spirit, which are the just reward of a true and simple heart.

It is impossible to check considerations which take our thoughts beyond the tomb. Perhaps the deepest faith utters the fewest words, and is most averse to point out in definite form and bright colours, the possibilities of distant and unknown scenes. But there are a few impressions, that force themselves on our spiritual consciousness, and will enter into all our speculations on the solemn and awful theme. Viewed in the light of immortality, we look on this earthly existence as a discipline of preparation, and on character acquired here as the condition of happiness hereafter—character representing and expressing the inward man from which all the disguises of a worldly respectability and distinction will be finally striped away. If then there be one form of character which an instinctive feeling teaches us to recognise as more qualified than another for the great transition of death—it is the simple, the truth-

ful, and the pure. All Christ's assurances and illustrations plainly declare this. It was the unconscious innocence of childhood which he held up to his disciples, as the fittest type on earth of the blessed inhabitants of heaven. The pride, the avarice, the ambition, the voluptuousness, that are here cloaked under reputable and sanctimonious forms, when they are brought up to that last tribunal, will be exposed to view before the searching glance of God, and their unfitness for the pure atmosphere of the heavenly world, made plain even to themselves. They will stand convicted in their own eyes. The soul will become its own judge and its own executioner. But the quiet, simple, genuine virtue that grew contentedly on its own soil and wore its natural hue on earth, will have no false appearances to cast aside. Unveiled in native innocence it will bend humbly and confidingly before its Maker, with no incurable remorse for the past and no overwhelming dread about the future. Truth had been its security in time; and truth will be its warrant through eternity. Led on by a Providential hand, it will take its place and enter on its vocation in that world of enduring blessedness, where all the pure in heart shall for ever behold their God.

XVI.

THE TRUE KNOWLEDGE OF LIFE.

John, xvii. 15.

"I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil."

It is a common practice with divines to place religion and the world in direct antagonism. Nor is this wholly the effect of perverse exaggeration. The faith of the first Christians, excited by the direct influence of so wonderful a phenomenon as the life of Jesus, was intense and overwhelming, and expressed itself in vehement re-action against the prevailing tendencies of an exceedingly corrupted civilisation: and Scripture, issuing from the inner depths of their religious life, is a glowing transcript of their impressions. It is not surprising, therefore, that those who take the Gospel precepts and examples in their literal strictness as immediately applicable to the present time, should seem to discover in them a certain warrant for asceticism, which is really at variance with the spirit of Christ's own life. To men who had declared war against the existing state of society, and believed that a new heaven and a new earth would shortly appear—the present world could possess little interest and value but as a scene of con-

flict and transition. The experience of centuries has shown, that their views were unfounded; but the vague use of Scripture language still upholds opinions in many minds respecting this world and its relation to eternity, which are irreconcilable with a right understanding of our actual duties and expectations. A vital truth making heaven a reality to our inmost consciousness, is not sufficiently distinguished from the accidental form, in which the circumstances of its original enunciation have moulded it. Such a distinction it is the more necessary to make, because otherwise, amidst the invincible remonstrances of common sense, it will be impossible to secure to the invisible world, a just ascendancy over our thoughts. When the spring has been drawn too tight in one direction, the rebound, we know, will be violent and dangerous in the other. Periods of gloomy superstition and wild fanaticism denying the reasonable claims of the present and the actual, have ever been followed by outbursts of uncontrolled licentiousness, which extinguish the light of heaven in the dark fumes of sensuality, and trample all that is divine and holy under foot. Men's reason tells them, that they are intended for action and enjoyment in this present world; and the future which lies beyond it, becomes doubtful, when its attainment is made dependent on the renunciation of interests and affections which are a necessary growth of the realities immediately encompassing us. True wisdom is to put heaven and earth in their due relation to each other, and to harmonise their claims upon us, by viewing them as successive stages

in one great connected scheme of spiritual development. Our Lord's sublime intercession for his followers, transmitted by the most spiritual of the Evangelists, conveys to us a right apprehension of this matter, and reconciles the various conditions of our being: 'I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.'

We of this age, it must be confessed, are in no great danger of becoming too deeply spiritual. What we have rather to guard against, are the absorbing influences of a material civilisation, and the too violent resistance of the practical reason to those demands of an entire renunciation of the world, which are still put forth in loose, traditional phrase from the pulpit, without any response in the living credence and sympathy of the popular heart. Plain, strong intellects, unaffected by any great spiritual sensibility—such as the most powerful workings of the day throw up in great abundance on the surface of society—repel with no disguised contempt the customary exhortations on this subject, as so much idle, professional discourse. Men's actions and avowed aims, if not their very words, say distinctly enough;—'You bid us give up the world, and come to the only fountain of true knowledge. Why, the knowledge of the world is worth all other knowledge; it deals with realities, for which you offer us but shadows and dreams.'

There is enough of truth in this representation to render doubly seductive the fallacy which it involves. For there is a fluent declamation about

things spiritual, which means absolutely nothing; and there is a knowledge of the world—in other words, of the present facts of our existence—which cannot be too highly appreciated. But different ideas may be conveyed under the same terms. What is often understood by a knowledge of the world, enfeebles instead of invigorating the character, infuses prejudices of the worst kind, and overclouds the mind at last with spiritual darkness. Knowledge of this description is in reality only ignorance of the highest truth. For man is placed by the constitution of his nature, on the limits of the sensuous and the spiritual worlds. Wisdom requires, that he should embrace both in his view and discern their harmony. But they who are specially designated men of the world, like certain spirits described by Swedenborg, have their perceptions open on one side only of their being. What is beneath them, they see; what they have in common with the animal, affects them as reality: but to the vast spiritual universe above and around them, filled with light and resonant with melody, their eye is closed and their ear is stopped.

Great mischief may result from a perverse misstatement of what is to be understood by a knowledge of the world. Advice like this has sometimes fallen from lips reputed wise:—'Let a youth see life; let him purge off his appetites and passions in a few years of free indulgence, and give the animal the rein; he will come to his senses at last, and know better how to deal with men and things, from this foregone experience of what they really are.' What

is the plain English of this? A young man will gain the truest knowledge of the world, not by keeping his vision clear and unobstructed, to gain a wide view of facts in all their bearings, but by the hazardous surrender of his moral freedom to the strongest forces that can hold it captive, and from which he may never afterwards get free.

Let us examine this advice, which has often passed current for wisdom. To simplify the question, we will here put out of view, as of minor importance, though still not entirely separable from moral consequences, the probable mischief of such a course to health and outward circumstances, which a total change of life in subsequent years may never suffice to redress. We will confine our attention to moral considerations alone. You plunge into vice merely, as you affirm, to know what it is—simply, as it would seem, from a speculative interest in it—with the full intention to renounce it soon and throw aside its contaminations. Reflect, then, on the possible results of the step which you are about to take. You cannot have dealings with the Evil One, and be sure of flinging him off whenever you like. When he has once seized you, he may overpower you and refuse to let you go. You run the risk of contracting habits whose bonds you may never more be able to dissolve, and of subjecting yourself to propensities which may keep you a slave for life—of undergoing an enfeeblement of will and a perversion of view, which may prevent you from ever rising again to the erectness of moral dignity and seeing things in their true light. But suppose this danger were out of the way; sup-

pose it were quite certain, you could return to a pure and regular life as soon as you wished: your theory at the outset is fundamentally wrong; you are seeking knowledge by a method which can only perpetuate ignorance. Familiarity with the world's vices can never reveal to you the world's great truths, or enable you to fathom its deep realities. This assertion may surprise you, but it is capable of the strictest proof.

The system of things to which we belong, and with which our duties, interests and hopes are bound up, is a vast whole, presenting itself under divers aspects to the mind. To understand it, we must view it on every side and in all its relations. We cannot better describe virtue, than as the ordering of our entire life in accordance with the governing law of this system—in other words, the co-operation of our voluntary agency with God. To reason wisely, therefore, and to act virtuously, we must keep life as a whole before us; and for this purpose, we must largely rely on recorded experience. The axioms of religion and morality, emanating from the deep intuitions of prophets and sages, and ratified by the collective testimony of the human race, exhibit authoritatively to the conscience of individuals those large general results of practical wisdom, which the impressions of our daily life, shut up in a narrow sphere and darkened by the influence of sense, would else hinder us from clearly apprehending. Only as we live in the light shed on us by the whole experience of the past, and firmly grasp the religious wisdom which embraces the world as a whole, can

we discern between the truth and falsehood of things and distinguish superficial shows from fundamental realities. Every mode of life which contracts our mental vision and excludes this broader light, though it may seem to make us more intimately acquainted with a particular order of facts, deadens our perception of the higher truths from which all facts receive their right interpretation, and which facts of any description are only useful as they serve to evolve and express.

If this reasoning be correct—and to me it seems unanswerable—it is evident, we must keep our minds in the large and open freedom, which cannot be disjoined from virtuous habits and a serious conviction of the moral value of life—in order to gain any knowledge of the world that really deserves the name. There is a right and a wrong solution of the great problem of our terrestrial existence. The former cannot be associated with the low views and grovelling appetencies of a vicious life; the latter at once discovers its insufficiency in the clear and serene light which envelopes a virtuous mind. We cannot adopt both solutions at the same time; but if knowledge be honestly our subject, there is one decisive consideration to determine our preference. In plunging into darkness, we lose all perception of light; whereas if we dwell in light, we still have a distinct apprehension of the form and mass and distribution of the shadows which limit and surround it. Sin deadens the mind to the discernment of what is holy and just: virtue has the very opposite effect on the appreciation of moral evil. The mor-

ally free alone perceive and feel what is true and beautiful and good, and alone are capable of acting with God in the pursuit and expression of them. They alone find happiness in continual sympathy with the pure and blessed Spirit that is present in all things. Vice enslaves a man, and destroys the individuality of soul which constitutes character; it dissolves the purely human in the instinctive and the animal.

Such is the effect of all the passions, when released from the control of reason and conscience: but the lower those passions are, and the less they are connected with any of the moral and intellectual energies of the soul, the more degrading and pernicious is their influence on the character. Vice ranges among the rudimental constituents of our being, and soon exhausts them. When it has spent its short-lived force, it rapidly gravitates towards the limits which define the conditions and restrict the capacities of a merely animal existence. Virtue has an unbounded sphere opened to it upwards; and into this it presses with ceaseless aspirations, which are ever taking new forms and transferring themselves to higher objects, and must be experienced to be understood. When the excitement of novelty is once over, vice speedily consumes its materials. Its narrow round of enjoyments is soon completed, and is retraced again and again with wearisome monotony—habit claiming its customary tribute of stimulus, while the ebbing tide of sensibility has continually less and less to supply. To comprehend vice, it is

unnecessary to be familiar with it. Its seeds lie within ourselves, and we are conscious of them: its fruits are conspicuous to the eye, profusely scattered in the world around us. We have only, therefore, to watch our own hearts and observe the ways of men, to be fully aware, what it is, and what it must be. The latent sources of vice are open to the immediate inspection of conscience, and we have no difficulty in tracing them to their remoter consequences. But such is the nature of vice, the nearer you draw to it, the worse you see it; for the eye is oppressed with a mass of details which lose their true meaning and character, when insulated from the broader relations which we must stand at a greater distance to be able to embrace. One thing only perhaps the uniniated cannot picture to themselves—and that is, the agony of remorse, when the soul first awakens to the degradation of sin, and painfully attempts to return to the ways of purity and peace. Virtue, on the other hand, is the consciousness and the manifestation of the immortal and progressive element of our being. We must be intimate with it, to know it. Its quality cannot be inferred and conjectured beforehand. Its outward relations and visible aspects convey no adequate idea of what it is. Its blessing is all within—in cheerful peace and calm contentedness—in the conscious health and vigour of the soul—in the presence of kindly and generous affections — in that pure indwelling light of heaven which brightens and burnishes the outward face of things, and brings

out its deep significance, and gives back varied and multiplied in endless reflections, the beauty that glows in the spirit itself.

A misapprehension of the true knowledge of life is fostered, partly by a natural recoil from the monkish renunciation of its healthful pursuits and enjoyments, which is sometimes enjoined as the only qualification for heaven—and partly by the strong interest which none can help feeling, in every vivid and faithful delineation of the workings of human passion. Unprincipled writers calculate on this craving after excitement, which adheres in some degree to all minds, but especially to the less educated, and delight to pamper it; and when for this purpose, they entertain the public with delineations of unmixed wickedness and alluring sensuality, which can only tend to confuse the moral perceptions and pervert the sentiments of the reader—no language is strong enough to reprobate such monstrous productions, as a hideous disturbance of the spiritual harmonies of creation and a daring insult to humanity. But setting such exceptional cases aside—it is certainly true, that genius has put forth its highest efforts in tracing the course of lawless passion, of withering hate, of indomitable revenge, of wild ambition and of remorseless avarice; and it may be asked, how could these wonderful pictures have been produced, without an experimental knowledge of the dark secrets which they disclose? Is not the purchase of so deep an insight into the mysteries of human nature, worth a few violations of the conventional morality of society? If we analyse

this question, we shall find in it no vindication of a familiarity with vice. For what really fascinates us in the darker portraitures of the dramatist and novelist—is not vice viewed in itself as the end of the representation—but the struggle which it calls forth and sustains with purer and nobler tendencies—those touches of natural affection, those relentings of human tenderness and compassion, those convulsive starts and throbbings of a conscience not yet extinguished, which deepen our interest in goodness by fearful contrast with the demoniac power that would crush it—and that display of a mighty will and a commanding intellect, which invests perverted aims and strong passions with a certain character of greatness, and makes us look on man even in his degradation and his fall, as a being of wonderful and glorious capacity. Take away these glimpses of moral significance; leave pure, unredeemed wickedness in their place; and if your own mind be not already corrupted by it, you will turn away from the picture in disgust. The attraction is not in the evil, but in the good which is so mysteriously interwoven with it, and which is made more affecting by its strange accompaniments. Where the whole is one dark blot of shade, there can be no picture. In the hands of a true artist, shade is only introduced in subserviency to light: effect, expression, beauty depend on light alone.

When it is affirmed, that those who have so powerfully depicted vice, must themselves have been experimentally acquainted with it—this can only be admitted with important qualifications.

They must, it is true, have penetrated far and wide and deep in the ways of the world, and seen them with their own eyes—had free intercourse with men of every character and condition, nor kept aloof from their darkest and saddest haunts. No closet-student—no reader of humanity through books—could ever have become a Shakspeare, a Moliere or a Goethe. They must, no doubt, have known vice well and been in frequent contact with it, but—such is the protecting influence with which the highest genius ever invests the mind—without being over-mastered or enslaved by it. The power of dealing with any agent, implies that we have it under our control. To apprehend it distinctly, and be able to analyse it—its bewildering influence over us must have ceased, and we must look at it quietly from a certain distance. To command any subject adequately, we must stand above it. The great men who have dissected the human heart, and laid bare its secrets, and displayed the manners in the broad lights and shades of an unceremonious truth, may in their darker and more unguarded moments have been borne away by the impetuosity of passion, or surrendered themselves to the intoxication of vicious indulgence: but they must have held the rein of their own impulses, and been able, when they chose, to bid them stop, or the power of their genius to that extent was enfeebled and in peril. Only by the light of what was still pure and noble in their own minds, could they discriminate the true features of vice, and hold them up to the abhorrence of mankind. No writer of real genius ever painted vice

as an object to be admired for itself, or was ever so completely its victim as to lose his own moral sense. Genius in its highest function cannot co-exist with a corrupted moral sentiment. Not that genius and the moral sentiment are coincident or necessarily in unison; for genius is the intuitive perception of what is—moral sentiment, the feeling of what ought to be: but every function of our being, however powerful and creative, must then exert its genuine and proper force, when it operates in harmony with the other elements of the complex nature to which it belongs.

This is not to assert, that men of genius have generally been men of blameless lives. The fact is confessedly otherwise. Their passions may be expected to be strong in proportion to the susceptibility of their temperament:—but as a compensation, they are usually endowed with a vigour of intellect and a depth of moral feeling, if not always with an energy of will, which render their occasional aberrations less dangerous by securing greater facility of return, and in most cases suffice to preserve them from utter degradation. Sometimes good and evil influences are so balanced in their life, that it is passed in violent alternations from one to the other—in prostrations that level them with the brute, followed by spasmodic efforts after a virtue more than human. If the ascendancy of the higher nature is once permanently laid low, genius also droops and can no longer soar. No ordinary man, then, is justified in appealing to the questionable precedents of genius. Genius has stronger impulses to plead;

it has also a stronger intellect to restrain and guide. If you ask the same latitude for the vehemence of your passions, you must show, that you have the same controlling power. You must consider the peril of the experiment. You must ask yourself whether, if you once venture forth on the wide sea of folly and excess, you are likely to find at some future day enough of wisdom and energy in your soul, to pilot your course through the reefs and breakers, amidst which the gifted spirits of Burns and Sheridan and Coleridge, made such disastrous shipwreck. Profit by the experience of others. Enough has been written, to lay open to you all the mysteries of vice. It is a superficial affair, and soon understood. Age after age it renews the same miserable game, and betrays the same poverty of resources. Minds of rare endowment have accepted its offers, and proved its hollowness, and recorded their penitence for your instruction. Ponder well what they have written; compare it with what you feel in yourself and what you observe in others; and you will get a sufficient insight into the few odious realities, in the knowledge of which from personal experience, some men would fain persuade you, that true practical wisdom consists. Man's history is one long record of experiments. Where you see others have fallen and sunk into misery, why should you gratuitously incur the same risk and expose yourself to the same sufferings, when nothing new is to be learned, and the retributions of the past can only be repeated in the future?

Know the world, then; know it well—but in a

wise and noble sense. Go forth into it with a free and manly courage, protected by virtuous habit and guided by firm and enlightened principle. Go, with a heart open to all its sympathies and an eye keenly observant of its manifold experience; but keep your own life and soul uncontaminated from the sin which so deeply pervades it. Sin will only darken your vision and perplex your way. Sin is but the shade and negation of existence. If you seek reality, give up your reason to know the whole truth, and your will to practise all that is right. Fear not that life will ever become too easy or too smooth a task. With the strongest moral power and the clearest moral insight, there will still remain enough, to puzzle and confound—enough to struggle against —enough to rouse our deepest interest and liveliest sensibility—enough to require the fullest exertion of our highest faculties. Repose was not intended for man. His progress must be a perpetual endeavour. As we slowly rise in the moral scale, things which we once acquiesced in or were indifferent to, strike us as evils and sins, brought out in strong relief by contrast with a purer sense of moral beauty and a clearer consciousness of moral elevation.—Nevertheless, avoid scrupulousness. Having fixed your principles and habits and settled your predominant aim, be not too solicitous about the effect of particular acts and particular words. Character is determined by the general rule of life, not by the casual exception. Cherish an enthusiasim for whatever is pure and noble and excellent. Stoop to nothing mean or sordid or base. Be more intent on the ac-

complishment of some great good, worthy and adequate to fill your affections and absorb your interest and stimulate your highest endeavour, than overanxious to shun the smaller errors, which may jar for a moment on the conventional proprieties of society, but when the heart is pure and the aim is upright, will be overborne and compensated by the prevailing tendency of the character. Ardour for right inspires greatness and elevation of soul. Simple fearfulness of wrong contracts the vision and paralyses the will. If you would become a true moral hero, exercise your reason freely, and persist in the course which conscience bids you take, without fearing either the judgments of men or the consequences of your own acts. Seek your strength in the spirit of a living faith. Live to God, and work in God. Transfer the life of Christ into your own life. That will sanctify every element of your moral being; make you all but omnipotent in the cause of truth and right; and deliver you for ever from the torment of fear and scrupulousness. Seek out and welcome goodness and beauty in all things. They are there, if you will only look for them. To the pure all things are pure. Use whatever is, and whatever must be, as so much power confided to you by God and subject to your own responsible will, for bringing into existence, promoting and disseminating, all which you perceive ought to be, and which, in the same degree that you are faithful and have trust in God, will at last certainly prevail.

XVII.

THE RELIGION OF THE INTELLECT AND THE RELIGION OF THE HEART.

MATTHEW, vi. 22.

"The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light."

THERE is a close analogy between things spiritual and material. We interpret the one by the aid of the other. What the eye is to the outward, the soul is to the inward, nature of man—the organ and avenue of light. By that faculty within us which we call the soul, we know God, and apprehend duty, and conceive the hope of immortality. Through the soul comes the light, without which our mortal pathway would be involved in darkness. It is important that a light so essential to our highest welfare, should reach us pure, unbroken and strong, and pervade every part of our being—intellect, affection, will and action. We need a clear and open spiritual eye, as the all-illuminating sun of our interior frame; that every power and sympathy and aspiration may be turned to the fountain of light, and drink in its beams, and Religion become a penetrating and impregnating principle of the entire man. There is a tendency, however, in the religious element to insulate itself in some one of our various faculties, and

to withdraw from the rest—to manifest itself, for example, as mere feeling, or mere intellect, or mere outward action. Such a confinement of the principle best suits perhaps the indolence or native temperament of the individual. He resigns himself without effort or self-control to constitutional impulse or the disposal of circumstances. He com pounds for the absence of Religion in certain regions of his being, by cultivating it with great earnestness, where it is easy and agreeable to him, as a kind of second nature or spontaneous growth. But the distinctive character of Religion as such, is its universality and absoluteness—embracing in its grasp all the constituents of humanity. Other principles lie within the limits of our nature, and assume certain parts of it as their appropriate domain. Social and civil duty for example, occupy our active powers; science and abstract truth engage the intellect; and the domestic relations take up and absorb our affections. But religion transcends our finite being, and enfolds it from without. It is the spiritual atmosphere, in which the soul is suspended and exercises its vital functions. The true power and manifestation, therefore, of Religion are to be seen, not in any one of our faculties by itself, but in the harmonious balance and co-operation of all of them, under its searching influence and commanding sway.

It has been a question much agitated at all times and not least in the present day, whether Religion be an affair of the Reason or of the Heart. Men have even split into parties on the subject, and by mutual r eaction driven each other into absurd extremes on

both sides. This has been the chief point of controversy respecting the distribution of religious influence. None really acquainted with the nature of Religion, have ever thought of limiting its sphere to certain outward actions, without reference to their source. There are few who have not seen, that Religion, wherever originating, must at least be an inward principle. It is only in the last stage of religious indifference, that the value of any conviction or feeling is wholly denied, and men accept an outward conformity to the usages of the Church, conjoined with a moral life, as a sufficient test of Christianity. So long as Religion is a living principle, the question will constantly be raised—what is its proper source? the Understanding or the Heart?

We may distinguish the two tendencies, taking their departure from these different sources—as the Rationalist and the Mystical; each in its final issue representing an extreme, between which the true spirit of Christian belief steers a middle course. The Rationalist tendency usually commences in a healthful re-action—either against a dull, uninquiring formalism that slumbers under the spell of traditional phrases to which no distinct meaning is attached,—or else against a wild fanaticism carried away by vague and obscure feelings which are accepted as the substitute for steadfast principle and virtuous conduct. Such a state of deadness or aberration continually supervenes in the history of religious life: and when it is perceived and begins to be resisted—reformers make it their one object, to obtain clear ideas, as the great desideratum in Relig-

ion—to retain no opinion and practice for which an unanswerable reason cannot be assigned—to find premises in the region of definite and well-established fact, and to evolve the authority of the whole system of faith and worship in logical sequence out of them. The process of purgation is often sweeping and summary. Whatever cannot be subjugated to the conditions and brought within the limits thus arbitrarily determined—is at once cast forth as unsound, the seed of mischief and delusion. Under an overpowering dread of superstition and enthusiasm, feeling and imagination are banished from the domain of Religion. The vigorous fulness of unconscious poetry in which its earliest spirit was nursed, is carefully evaporated, and the meagre residuum collected and preserved as science. In all ages of the Church, we meet with individuals distinguished for their rationalising tendencies; but there are crises which particularly favour the development of this critical and negative spirit, when it becomes ascendant in the minds of earnest and thinking men, and sets its stamp on the prevalent theology of the time. In the genius of Luther himself there was a large infusion of the poetical element, which qualified the Rationalist bias of the reformer; but the principles which his position obliged him to appeal to, tended ultimately to Rationalism, and when taken up by men of drier and more logical minds—Calvin, Zwingli, and Socinus—led inevitably to that result. From the first great protest in the age of Luther, down to the close of the

last century—with occasional and transient resistance from a few men of fervid and enthusiastic spirit—the strengthening tendency of the Protestant mind of Europe has been towards Rationalism. The actuating spirit of all sects, though disguised at first in an effervescence of enthusiasm, is at bottom rationalistic. They want a more decided expression of dogma, than is found in the quiescent bosom of older churches; they crave more freedom of speech and act, than they have enjoyed in their previous associations; and both these demands call the reason into vigorous play. The last three centuries have been remarkable for the activity of sects; and this alone indicates the working of a latent Rationalism.

The Mystic tendency has its source in an opposite demand. It recoils from the affected precision and cold distinctness of a scientific theology. It has no pleasure in the hard and definite forms that stand out sharp and clear in the frosty light of the intellect. It seeks a return into the dimmer regions of fancy and affection. It wants the soul—the mysterious breath of inner life—which it feels should be present in every utterance of religious thought. Instead of aiming at a logical continuity of ideas, or exactly circumscribing the terms in which piety gives vent to its inward fulness of emotion—it dreads and shuns such scholastic rigour, as a check on the free soaring of the heart, and a confinement of the spiritual within the narrow limits of things finite and sensible. Deep, silent feeling—secret

converse with God—the quiet expectancy of his spirit—comparative indifference to outward forms and questions of doctrine—such are the signs and operations of the Mystic principle. Sometimes in its more vehement working, it has thrown the minds which it had seized, out of their previous communion, and given birth to sects. This has been when the stimulus of persecution was applied. For more generally, the Mystic tendency is too quiescent and contemplative to be sectarian. It is more disposed to find a common soul of spiritualism under all the recognised dogmas and established forms of existing churches, which in themselves it surveys with placid indifference, or simply uses as means made effective by arbitrary association, for kindling exalted states of religious emotion. In the Mystic, feelings replace ideas. He retires into himself, and owns the presence of God in a calm and holy frame of mind, or at times amidst silent contemplations of the grand and beautiful aspects of external nature. As this tendency deepens, God, duty, heaven gradually lose their distinctness as objective ideas, and melt away into mere sentiment—become mental conditions so purely subjective, that although affection still vibrates faintly through them, they offer no material to the understanding and furnish but a feeble stimulus to the will. This is the extreme phase of the principle—its corruption and decline. In its earlier stages, it may co-exist with the noblest intellectual powers and finest qualities of the heart. Many are the beautiful and instructive works that have been

written under its influence. Fenelon and à Kempis suffice to show what deep-thoughted wisdom and spiritual loveliness it can infuse into mind and character.

It is quite evident, that there is some truth and some error in both the Rationalist and the Mystic tendencies; and that they have been driven violently asunder from a common centre where they ought to subsist in unison. There can be no steady and operative belief, without some clear and definite idea embraced by the understanding. In all belief, therefore, there must be a rationalistic element. But in genuine piety, there will also be a depth and intensity of feeling, more than proportionate to any ideas which can possibly come within the grasp of the intellect, and re-inforced by influences from that dim region of the Infinite, where distinct ideas are out of the question. In all true faith, then, there is room and need for a mystic element: and where it does not exist, faith is weak and imperfect.

The basis of faith is our inherent consciousness of realities that transcend the limits of the outward sense. God, a responsible soul, a spiritual world—are beliefs that grow out of the natural workings of a primitive feeling. Such a feeling is the elemental matter out of which our moral nature is formed. All our thoughts and acts presuppose its existence. Its entire absence would involve the abnegation of our humanity. Its possession marks the distinction between man and brute. There was a deep truth in the words of a great schoolman: 'I do not seek

to understand, that I may believe; but I believe, that I may understand.'* Belief is the root of understanding. But this primitive feeling—this intuitive belief—is only the rudiment of Religion. Reflection and reasoning must intervene, to mould it into form—in other words, to convert it into dogma and make it apprehensible by the understanding. This they effect by defining the vagueness of the original feeling, and distinctly realising it to perception, through the aid of phenomena that lie constantly under our immediate inspection. That great fact of mind springing up and growing within ourselves, supplies a measure of intelligible comparison for the boundless agencies which lie beyond us. The mutual adaptation, the order and the harmony so visible in creation, present the counterpart of effects which our own minds, within a narrower sphere, have the power of originating. Thus mind becomes to us an expression of Deity: and in forming a conception of the Supreme Mind, the Rationalist will be careful to admit no elements but such as are justifiable to reason, warranted by moral sense, and in harmony with pure and holy affection. The material of Religion is given *a priori;* form is impressed on it by the recipient and reflecting subject. As a consequence, form or dogma always sustains a certain relation to the individuality of the believer, and corresponds to his power of apprehending and real-

* Neque enim quæro intelligere ut credam, sed credo ut intelligam. Nam qui non crediderit, non experietur, et qui expertus non fuerit, non intelliget.' The words which Schleiermacher has taken from Anselm, as a motto to his 'Christliche Glaube.'

ising things infinite. On the other hand, the feelings of awe and reverence and trust which lie within the dogmatic conception and form its hidden soul, with such limitation and construction of them, as necessarily result from the universal laws of the human intellect and conscience — constitute the spiritual heritage of all pious souls and contain the germs of a Religion for mankind. But if in the effort to define dogmas—in controversy respecting them—or in seeking to impose a common type of them on all minds — the fundamental feeling in which they originated, and from which alone they derive any value or significance, should be enfeebled and lost;—then it is clear, that the whole subject under discussion, turns on the choice and collocation of words from which the living soul is fled, and that divines justly incur the charge so often alleged against them, of contending about a non-entity. They may work out a logical formula, but they will not develope a spiritual truth.

The importance of dogmas differs for communities and for individuals. In a church—which means a free union of worshippers—dogmas should be as few as possible—more implied and tacitly agreed upon, than distinctly expressed—and in their effect rather negative than positive, rather excluding the elements of probable discord, than defining points of agreement where the general heart and conscience, imbued with the spirit of Christianity, may be left to find a spontaneous sympathy. The proper object of a church is to preserve and cherish the feeling of Religion among mankind, and through

the repeated concentration and reinforcement of it in acts of social devotion, to send it forth with new power and impulse into the whole inward and outward life. For this purpose, there must, it is obvious, be some dogmatic agreement, but only in relation to broad, fundamental principles. There must be agreement respecting the object of worship, the sentiments and dispositions which are believed to be most acceptable to Him, and the mode in which the feelings of love and reverence towards Him should be outwardly and publicly expressed. There must be an avoidance in the language of the common worship, though not as necessarily in discourses from the pulpit, of all such topics as lie outside the recognised circle of sentiment within which the mingled hearts of the society can beat in unison; for there are many topics on which individuals may hold the greatest diversity of opinion without any diminution of high and holy sympathy in the essential feelings of Religion. In this sense, the observation is undoubtedly true, which has often been exposed to unmerited ridicule, that the uniting principle of church membership should be sought rather in the heart than in the head.

But the duty of the individual in regard to dogmas, goes far beyond this point. If he feels—as every serious mind must feel—the essential grandeur and solemnity of Religion—he will earnestly address his reason to the subject. By the exercise of his highest faculties, he will try to solve for himself the great problem of existence, and to harmonise the demands of faith and intellect. This is the

obvious duty of the individual, though many do not regard it as such; and till there has been an honest and energetic effort to fulfil it—at least practically and provisionally—no man possesses a true wisdom. Personal faith must rest to a considerable extent on clear and well-defined dogma. Dogma is the form in which the religious feelings of an individual fix and set themselves, so as to hold a positive relation to his understanding and exert an instrumental force upon his will. In the religious domain of a community, large spaces must be left open and free, unoccupied by any dogmatic determination; but in the faith of the individual, all these must be filled up—so far as he has intellectual strength for the task—to the inward peace and contentment of his own spirit. He will read, and reflect, and examine controverted points—and, where his own powers fail, he will accept the best authority to which reason conducts him, as a provisional guide—only to settle practical conviction and quiet disturbing doubts—only to send down Religion with a deeper root into his inmost soul, to engage all his faculties and affections more heartily in its service—and to envelope his entire being in a perpetual atmosphere of holy and devout sentiment. Such are the respective functions and mutual relations of Intellect and Feeling in the culture of Religion.

Religion—who can doubt it?—is the noblest of themes for the exercise of intellect. To search out the character and designs of the Infinite Being—to trace his laws in the wondrous economy of creation—to weigh the deep and subtle questions that are

involved in the essential conditions of spiritual existence, God's all-embracing causality, man's freedom and responsibility—to meditate on duty, death, retribution, immortality—to contemplate the revelations of the Divine Mind in the minds of sages and holy men and prophets and a Christ—to read the eternal thoughts of God in the great book of human history—to pursue that marvellous fact of Christianity from age to age and from clime to clime, winding its golden thread unbroken through the dark tissue of human passions and woes, ever witnessing amidst scornful indifference and hostile unbelief, the reality of a diviner life than that of earth—to balance the claims of those vast powers of Church and State, which still convulse the world with their jealousy and conflict—lo! here are subjects of surpassing greatness and interest, which have tasked the efforts of the mightiest spirits—a Pascal, a Leibnitz, a Newton, a Locke, a Kant, a Schleiermacher: and no one who reflects on their profound meditations, their elaborate reasonings, and their solemn utterances of conviction—can doubt, that Religion is no idle sport of momentary feeling, but an awful truth which underlies all other truths, and demands for its illustration and enforcement the consenting homage and service of all our human powers.

Still it was feeling—a sense of something anterior to reasoning, and the basis of all knowledge—a faith that rose silently from the inner consciousness and infused itself into every intellectual operation—which impelled those great men to exercise their highest faculties on the solemn theme, and opened

their hearts to the influx of sympathies which they shared in common with the simplest and most unlearned of their race. Yes, it was feeling which made them religious—the same feeling which fills the bosom of the child with wondering reverence and awe when the name of God is first associated with the beauty and grandeur and immensity of the visible universe—the same feeling which in humbler spheres binds men to duty and comforts them in sorrow, and inspires them in the consciousness of an invisible presence with holy love and a sublime trust. The wisest can only be religious through those common sympathies, which remind us all, whatever be our degree of intellectual cultivation, that we are members of one human family—which strengthen the virtuous to help and encourage each other when the cause of right and truth seems fa[illegible]powers fa[illegible]the earth—which gather with tenderer, holi[illegible]ich reas[illegible]nce around the heart, as the light of life grows[illegible]y to s[illegible], and the shade steals on which to mortal eyes will [illegible]ench it for ever. In such sympathies the vital power of Religion consists. Its proper seat is in the heart. Such are feelings, which all alike require—which shed a sacred calm on the last moments of the Christian scholar and sage, and dispel all gloom from the bed where the lowliest child of poverty and toil gives back his spirit to his Creator. If Religion is unable to nurse these sympathies and supply these feelings—it is an empty name. Ah! Christian, what will it avail thee, when the sad and solemn realities of existence press heavily on thy heart, that thou art versed in all the subtleties of dogmatic lore, and

hast sounded the depths of controversy, and canst produce a reason for every article of thy creed, of which the ablest adversary is unable to dispossess thee? Canst thou find spiritual nourishment in these things? Do they yield thee the vital strength and inward solace of Religion? If thou hast never tasted the holy peace, which descends into the simplest heart, when it fervently realises the presence of God—if no gleam from the future life ever brightens thy earthly way—if the sores and irritations of thy contact with the world, are never soothed and softened by the healing consciousness of a divine love—thou hast studied to little purpose, and the fountains of a true happiness are yet sealed up to thee. Go rather and forsake thy books; cast off the cumbrous pedantry that oppresses thy brain and darkens thy affections; and learn a better lesson of that humble follower of Christ, whose highest wisdom is to know and serve God—whose Religion fills his heart with joy and his life with love.

XVIII.

THE GROUNDS AND LIMITS OF SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY.

HEBREWS, xii. 9.

"We have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of our spirits and live?"

THE question of authority in Religion, with its relation to the rights of private judgment, is by the majority of men very imperfectly understood, and, when thoroughly looked into, presents more difficulty than superficial thinkers perceive. Few Protestants comprehend its real nature and whole extent. From the inherent inconsistency of the position which they ordinarily assume, and their unwillingness to recognise any element of truth in the grounds of their adversaries, they lay themselves open to attacks, in their controversy with the Catholics, which it is impossible effectually to repel. To this cause, quite as much as to any insidious influence of papal emissaries, we must ascribe the great increase of Romish principles among the educated classes of this country, ever since the revival of an interest in Church questions. As hitherto conducted,

discussion has rather weakened than strengthened Protestantism.

There are only three positions which the mind can possibly take, for the settlement of controverted points and the fixation of its own religious belief:—(1.) that of individual self-reliance; (2.) that of submission to some accredited authority from the Past, either in a sacred scripture or in a symbolical book expository of scripture; (3.) that of deference to some perpetual and concurrent authority, in a living person or body of persons. In a great number of cases, these principles are variously intermingled with each other; they can never perhaps be kept entirely separate: but the decided predominance of one of them, gives a distinguishing character to the faith which is moulded under its influence. We may hence divide all religious belief into three grand forms, marked off from each other by their fundamental principle: (1.) Free Inquiry, which refers the decision of every question predominantly and ultimately to the individual judgment; (2.) Protestantism, which acknowledges Scripture as the all-sufficient authority, but usually adopts some recognised interpretation of it, in a creed or a catechism, as its actual guide; and (3.) Catholicism, which submits to the present determination of the Church, whether its authority be represented by one individual or by many. On one or other of these grounds or some composition of them, can we alone arrive at any conclusion respecting matters of faith. These are the fixed limits, within which lies the whole field of religious controversy. Let us examine each of

these principles in turn, and consider, what can be alleged on behalf of them, and wherein they prove themselves wanting. We will take them in the reverse order of that in which they have been now stated—beginning with the Catholic.

I. The Catholic system affirms the necessity of an unbroken line of traditional authority from the age of the apostles to the present day—to transmit and authenticate the truths of Christianity. Till the general recognition of a scriptural canon, which cannot be dated before the middle at least of the second century—tradition was necessary to preserve Christianity in existence: and the heads of the churches which had received it in the first instance from the apostles, were its proper witnesses and representatives to the world. Scripture itself was at length owned and ratified by the same individuals who had hitherto perpetuated the tradition.* Scripture became then a substitute for the earlier tradition; or rather it embodied the selectest substance of the tradition in a fixed and permanent form. And yet the excluded portion of the tradition could not be wholly dispensed with, as a concurrent authority and a help to interpretation. From the complex and multifarious character of Scripture, from its partially discordant materials, and from its openness to an endless variety of construction—any approach to uniformity of belief or agreement in practice was obviously impossible, without the erection of some

* Such I suppose to have been the class of persons designated by Eusebius as οἱ κατὰ διαδοχὰς ἐκκλησιαστικοί.—*Hist. Eccles.* II. 25. III. 25, *with Heinichen's Note.*

tribunal which might serve at once, as a witness of what had hitherto once been received as true doctrine, and as an authority to pronounce, in cases yet undecided, what should be considered such for times to come. Who so fit for the exercise of this double function, as those who had filled, or were still filling, the highest stations in the Church—through whom under the influence of the Spirit, it was believed, that the living tradition of Christianity had been handed down from the first age—and whose united voice was accepted as the voice of God?—Œcumenic councils have settled fundamental points; the fathers transmit a long chain of judgments from century to century; bishops for the time being take up and interpret the doctrines delivered to them; and the sovereign bishop or Pope collects, expresses and executes the consentient decrees of the whole Church. Such in general is the constitution of the authority which Catholics plead for, as legitimately vested in their Church.*

From the obvious necessity for uninterrupted tradition to warrant the pure conveyance of a historical religion, and for some competent tribunal to decide what is law, in a book so obscure and conflicting in many of its statements, as Scripture—

* The Catholic doctrine of Tradition is luminously expounded by Möhler in his Symbolik, § 38 and 39. 'Die Tradition is das fortwährend in den Herzen der Gläubigen lebende Wort.—Die Tradition im objectiven Sinne ist der in äusserlichen historischen Zeugnissen vorliegende Gesammtglaube der Kirche durch alle Jahrhunderte hindurch: in diesem Sinne wird gewöhnlich die Tradition die Norm, die Richtschnur der Schrifterklärung, die Glaubensregel, genannt. p. 357.

Catholic disputants are able to invest their case with a sufficient show of plausibility, to puzzle those who are not so prejudiced as to see only one side of the question, and yet have never reasoned down the subject to its fundamental principles. And all these considerations acquire a double force, when certain assumptions adroitly slipped in among them, are unsuspectingly admitted by the mind: first, that some one clearly defined, exclusive and self-consistent system of doctrine is essential to the preservation of Christian truth, the purity of the Church, and the salvation of individuals; and secondly, that as the multitude cannot evolve this system from Scripture for themselves, so men of the highest station in the Church must derive from their position the necessary qualifications for discovering the truth and an inherent authority to declare it. In affirmation of these claims, the Catholics lay stress on particular texts of Scripture. But Scripture, were its language ever so explicit, could not furnish the credentials of any such authority as is assumed; since Scripture emanated as a rule or canon from the very class in whose favour it is required to speak. To cite it for this purpose, is like producing a man as his own witness in his own court. When the attempt is made to ground these high pretensions on history independent of Scripture, we detect such contrariety of opinion on fundamental questions, and so many instances of human passion and infirmity, in the most eminent fathers—such vacillation and inconsistency of purpose, so much intrigue and corruption, and even violence in the measures which are

known to have influenced the decisions of ecclesiastical councils—that no man who forms his judgment from facts, can repose his faith with any assurance on authorities like these. Nevertheless, when the assumptions to which I have adverted, are incautiously allowed to pass, and conscious inability to solve the many difficult questions confidently affirmed to involve eternal salvation, is brought home by a skilful advocacy to unprepared and susceptible minds—it is not surprising, that some should finally give way to the specious fallacies of this subtle mixture of truth and falsehood.

II. Protestantism at its outset had a heavy charge of the worst corruption to allege against Catholicism. Selfish and ambitious men had accumulated abuse on abuse, and thrown up, in defence of their own power and wealth, a huge mass of rite and usage, cemented by the vilest superstition, for which not the shadow of a reason could be found in Scripture or the primitive institution of Christ. A superficial theology and a lax morality had diffused themselves with the secular disorders of the Church. Tradition under cover of mediæval darkness had wholly disjoined itself from Scripture, and rioted at large without check or control. A latent heathenism was its actuating principle. Things were said and done in the name of Christ, utterly abhorrent to the spirit of his religion. There was not the trace of a similitude between the lordly and voluptuous prelates of the Roman hierarchy and the simple missionaries of Galilee. Like the scribes of old, the ecclesiastical rulers of this western world had made

the Word of God of none effect by their tradition. In all these things Protestantism had a strong case for itself, and in the first impulse of its sincere and fervent zeal, went, as it is believed, to the root of the whole matter. It took Scripture directly and exclusively as the sole witness of Divine truth, to which the authority of the Church and the reason of individual man, both deeply tainted by hereditary sin, must equally bow. But Protestantism was soon startled by consequences—springing inevitably from the ground taken by her—which she was quite unprepared for, and refused to admit. She had embraced a principle which justified every man in becoming his own interpreter of Scripture, and put arguments into the hand of her great antagonist, which she was unable to repel without condemning her own separation. The Catholics reproached her —and with apparent reason—for having sown the seeds of incurable anarchy and confusion. She was perplexed and dismayed: and events soon made her aware of the incalculable extent of the consequences flowing from her own act, which she had not foreseen. Various minds exulting in freedom, took up by a sort of elective affinity from Scripture, just those elements which most harmonised with their own moral and intellectual temperament, and proceeded boldly to circulate them in practice; nor was it without obvious justice that they referred to Luther's conduct in vindication of their own. Munzer and the Swabian peasants, John of Leyden and the visionaries of Munster, wild Antinomians on one hand, and cold, rationalising Socinians on the other

—all could produce some texts from the same volume in favour of their several theories, and asked why Christian liberty was to begin and end with Luther himself.

Before long all the larger sections of the Protestant Church drew out into public formularies, what they accepted as the substance of Christian doctrine contained in Scripture, and demanded from their adherents the profession of conformity to this recognised standard of truth. They still indeed appealed to Scripture as the only valid authority, especially in controversy with the Romanists; but it was Scripture—not as it lay naked to the general eye, but as it was seen through the coloured medium of a particular theological system. There was more reason for such a course, in an age when men had long been accustomed to lean on external authority, than may at first view occur to those, who have not taken into account the many difficulties of Scriptural interpretation, nor well considered how much judgment is required to apply its lessons profitably to the actual circumstances of the world. But it was a course plainly inconsistent with the full development of the broad principle which Luther's necessities more perhaps than his deliberate choice had compelled him to adopt; and it must be regarded, therefore, as an admission of precipitancy, and a retrocession so far towards the authoritative principle of the older Church. Some minds were thrown back by a perception of these inconsistencies, into the communion which they had forsaken. They return-

ed, however, not unaffected by the crisis through which they had passed, and blended with the resumption of their ancient associations, a spirit of rationalism which has been compared for its union of philosophic and hierarchic tendencies, to some speculations of the present day.*

A great principle was undoubtedly asserted by the first Protestants—taking their stand as they did on a religion essentially historical—in concentrating attention and reverence on the documents which authenticated its origin and presented its genuine doctrines. They had reason, moreover, for the conclusion which they soon embraced—that the uneducated multitude were incompetent to extract from the miscellaneous contents of Scripture, a clear and consistent rule of faith and practice—especially on the ground then generally assumed, that every part of it was inspired and of equal value. They were right in contending for the need of learning and cultivated, intellect to restrain and guide the blind fanaticism and impetuous ignorance of the popular mind. The Confessions put forth by the great Protestant divines, Melancthon, Calvin and Bullinger—and the Articles adopted by the Reformed Church of England—judged by the circumstances under which they were imposed—ought less to be considered a deliberate infringement on Christian liberty, than a provision for practical unity extorted by

* See Neander's Historical Monograph—'Theobald Thamer, der Represantant und Vorgänger moderner Geistesrichtung in dem Reformationszeitalter.' Berlin, 1842.

the necessities of the times, without which not a single church could have settled down into order and consistency. That Scripture simply and by itself can never be a direct rule for the belief and conduct of any extensive association of men, must be obvious to every one who will dispassionately consider what Scripture is. The fact is proved by universal experience. No church can subsist without a creed, expressed or implied—a fixed or a progressive one; and the medium through which that creed operates, is some exposition of doctrine interposed between the popular mind and Scripture itself. Subsequently, indeed, the creed may be verified or proved false, by an immediate examination of Scriptural evidence; but the cases are comparatively rare, and only under peculiar circumstances possible, in which an entire creed can be deduced at once and exclusively from Scripture. Even those who protest the most loudly and indignantly against creeds, in point of fact have, and require, one—like all their fellow Christians—although it may not be authoritatively set forth, and no public recital of it be in use. We observe, that all religious Societies decline, in which the spiritual consciousness is indistinct and weak—when the preaching is confined to vague, superficial generalities, with nothing marked and definite to indicate earnest conviction. In churches whose hereditary boast is the admission of the largest freedom of individual opinion, great stress is properly laid on a careful instruction of the young in the grounds and principles of their faith; and a demand goes forth repeatedly from their bosom, for

some clear and explicit declaration of the implied belief.*

So long, therefore, as Christianity shall be supposed to retain any dogmatic elements, and is not wholly resolved into a general spiritual influence—some creed, as a bond of Christian association, is not only not wrong, but inevitable. Every thing depends on its construction and extent, and the terms of its acceptance. It was the capital error of the first Protestants, which has enslaved so many of their descendants—that instead of a provisional form of belief, demanded by the time, but open to a progressive expansion and development—they set up a rigid and permanent standard to which all must outwardly conform. The Formulary of Concord and the Thirty-Nine Articles are regarded by the Lutheran and Anglican Churches, as a fixed embodiment of Christian truth, to guide for all time the

* The aversion from any systematic exposition of their belief, has been carried in England to a vicious extent by those Protestant sects that most pride themselves on their mental freedom. They ascribe it to their reliance on the sufficiency of Scripture, but it really indicates spiritual coldness and debility. No minds seem to exist among them of sufficient fervour and power, or sufficiently grounded in the needful theological discipline, to be capable of clearly grasping fundamental principles, and consequentially deducing from them, by the united aid of Scripture, history and reason, the great leading results of Christian doctrine and practice—not as an authoritative type of opinion, but as a help and a guide to the inquirer, and at least a proximate and provisional standard of belief by which to distinguish a particular section of the Universal Church. In Germany, Catholics and Protestants produce in abundance books of this description, which greatly assist the attainment of clear ideas on controverted points. With us nothing of the sort is to be found.

teachings of their ministers—statements of doctrine, which future learning is not to enlarge and modify, but simply to vindicate. The authoritative principle of Rome has been thus resumed by Protestantism—and with still less adaptation to the ever changing condition of the human mind: for the great idea of the old Church, was that of a living tradition, capable of growth from age to age, and ever developing new lights for the exposition of the written word. The fixedness of the later Romish system, as expressed in the decrees of the Council of Trent, has resulted from re-action against the new dogmatism by which Catholicism was assailed, and is therefore indirectly due to the tendencies of its adversary. Learning, it is true, and free inquiry, have always flourished to a great extent in Protestant churches and Protestant universities,—but more through the influence of principles which came into operation along with Protestantism, as involved in its fundamental postulate, than from the immediate action of Protestantism itself. It has ever been the tendency of the ecclesiastical element of Protestantism, in its great and recognised forms—to bind down men's minds to a scrupulous maintenance of its original standards. Only by an extensive use of the system of accommodation have the later fruits of philology and abstract speculation enjoyed a precarious toleration under the recognised orthodoxy. In the new, as in the old, church, the false principle has been assumed, that human salvation is contingent on the acceptance of truth in a particular doctrinal form. By setting up a rigid scripturalism

against a fluctuating tradition—a past and permanent, instead of a present and variable, authority—Protestantism has often as completely denied the rights of the human mind, as Catholicism; and though happily its reverence for Scripture has generally secured a certain freedom of thought and latitude of inquiry at least within scriptural limits, yet its stern dogmatism and its narrow view of human relations to God have at times obstructed the progress of truth and a genuine mental culture, if not as openly and avowedly, almost as effectually, as the ancient despotism.

III. Free Inquiry, if it were true throughout to its fundamental principle, would cast off all external reliance and require a man to construct his religion entirely from personal resources. He must adopt nothing that he could not prove. But such absolute self-sufficiency is impossible. The social conditions of human development prevent it. Tradition and authority modify to an inconceivable extent the opinions and practice of the most independent minds. Many ideas and feelings which lie at the root of our religious belief, we are all conscious were transmitted to us. We know, that we have had no share whatever in producing them. They came to us; and we took them—for a certain authority which they seemed to carry with themselves, not disputed but rather confirmed by other principles of our being. Elements enter into all our reasonings and conclusions, which we are obliged to accept at second hand from persons whose character inspires us with trust, and whose knowledge and abilities qualify them to give

information. Questions come across us in the world, in regard to which we must form some opinion and take some course, although we are as yet incompetent to examine and settle them for ourselves. In the interval, therefore—without foregoing our right to inquire—we thankfully assume, as a provisional ground of action, the assurance of persons in whose judgment and integrity we have confidence, especially where the instruction which they give, is not discordant with the previous results of our own reasoning and experience.

With regard more particularly to religious usage and observances, and the traditions which determine the outward form and character of Christian churches —things in themselves indifferent, or only of relative importance as giving body and expression to invisible and spiritual realities—that which we find already established, that into which we are born, and under which we have been trained and educated—where it does not war with any higher feeling nor check spiritual development—has a claim on our reverential acceptance, although we can assign no logical reason, why it should be exactly as it is and not otherwise, and although, had we now to make an arrangement for the first time, we might not strike out precisely the very thing that exists. Too much reasoning about such points implies an arid and unfruitful scrupulousness. Spiritual agencies require a visible clothing and distinct utterance. Without some perceptible shape and determination, Religion cannot bind men together in a fellowship of worship, nor even subsist as a social power. So long as our

souls are encased in flesh, intercouse and sympathy cannot wholly dispense with material links. What *is* is *therefore* best, *because* it is, if it do not depress and hinder what *ought* to be. In this respect religious, stand on the same footing with civil, institutions. If the spiritual substance whether of freedom or of piety be kept pure and allowed to expand, the containing vehicle and outward organism may be left with advantage to the accidents of history, or the transmitted influence of some creative mind of the past. There is a deference too which we spontaneously yield to minds of eminent wisdom and sanctity, in their disclosures respecting that higher spiritual consciousness, wherein we perceive they lie so much nearer God than ourselves, though we cannot assign any distinct logical grounds for the assurances they convey. This deference is the basis of prophetic authority, which overpowers to the degree in which it is felt, the perfect freedom and independence of intellectual action. Increasing as it does in proportion to our conviction of the perfect holiness of its object, it is the secret of that profound veneration and trust which most religious natures associate with the person of Christ.

In regard, then, to ideas imbibed in childhood, but through life lying at the root of our deepest belief—to knowledge indispensable to the completeness of opinion, but placed beyond our present means of verification—to forms which are but accidents in the outward manifestation of Religion, yet without which its spirit would want the needful instrumentalities of influence—and to the trustful sub-

mission which high spiritual excellence always commands with minds conscious of their own inferiority —in all these particulars, every man, however much he may affect an entire individuality of opinion, is inevitably, and far more perhaps than he is aware, governed by tradition and dependent on authority. Our spiritual life is moulded and limited by conditions over which the will has no power, inasmuch as they belong to that vast sovereignty of influences and impressions inherited from the past, to which we are subjected from our birth, and unconsciously yield obedience.

But again there are bounds to this dependence, which it is important to mark, not only because they legitimate it to the extent that it must exist, but because they are continually narrowing it with the development of the moral and mental faculties. These bounds are defined by every man's interior sense of truth and right. This sense is our only sure guide, so far as it will take us. By it we are finally determined to the acceptance of Christ himself and his prophetic predecessors—and to the religious study of the writings produced under their influence. By this same sense too, as an indirect criterion, we judge of the title of many things to our safe confidence, where they are not, and cannot be, subjects of direct knowledge and personal conviction. If we find that the influence of these secondary opinions, accepted provisionally on the warrant of others, is in harmony with our fundamental feeling of what is right, and helps to unfold and strengthen what is good and noble within us—

we may rest on them without danger, till further growth of reason and ampler means of knowledge shall enable us to master the whole intellectual process for ourselves. If the effect be of an opposite kind—if it disturb our moral convictions—if it excite and encourage our meaner propensities—if it indispose us to duty, and turn away our hearts from our fellow-creatures and from God—though we should be wholly unable to meet logically the sophistries by which such opinions are enforced, we may nevertheless unhesitatingly reject them as false; for the argument in the conscience will suffice for their confutation. In this highest of all human functions—the exercise of moral responsibility—man is and must be, under every religious system, dependent on his individual judgment alone for his belief and conduct. Here he is exempt from the claims of tradition, and bound to set himself above all external authority. With the progress of moral and mental culture, self-reliance and provisional submission to authority assume a different relation towards each other. As men know more and acquire a richer spiritual experience, they take less on trust, and form a more immediate judgment of religious truth. We outgrow by degrees the need of that dependence on others, which was at first indispensable, and which may still be required for the less-advanced of the human race. Till we can go alone, we must lean on the hand of a guide. This is an obvious limitation of the prerogative of self-reliance and the right of private judgment.

For ages to come, possibly for ever, authority

under some modification may continue to operate in this life as a determining influence in the formation of those states of mind, where our hopes and our consolations and all our incentives to virtue have their securest abode. The intuitions of the wise will ever shed their mysterious light on the dark road of human destiny. The voice of the prophet will ever exercise a religious sway over the believing heart. Such are 'the fathers of our flesh' who conduct us in our passage to the other world; and because they speak to us in words which inspire our trust, of heaven and heavenly things—we duly give them reverence. Only in times to come, these may no longer be the consecrated priest, the accredited teacher, the recognised guide—men honoured and useful in their day, and still destined in many situations to dispense influences of the purest good—but all gifted spirits of every class, who conceive high thoughts and clothe them in words of searching power, and breathe heaven's inspiration into the human heart. Such will become priests and prophets for the future generations of mankind. All genuine ministries—all that give evidence of true apostolic descent—subserve the one only purpose of subjecting men to the Father of spirits, that they may live. It is the highest wisdom so far only to depend on external authority, as we feel that it helps us upward to God, and gives us inward freedom in Him. How to combine and harmonise in the social fabric these two elements of liberty and authority, is the great problem that lies beneath all the local and more superficial questions that now

agitate the civilised world. Men are everywhere craving a freer surrender of their hearts and lives to the power of truth and the law of their own minds, in subjection to God alone. Priests and despots oppose this just demand of the awakening soul; but priests and despots cannot rule the world for ever. Such is the struggle through which vast portions of the human family must pass, ere they can appropriate the spiritual heritage which is their due. God grant a successful issue, and—if possible—a a bloodless transition!

XIX.

THE CHANGE OF DEATH.

Job, xiv. 14.

"All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come."

Traditional usage and customary modes of speech in which conviction and feeling have little share, so beset our human life with shows and forms on every side, that it is very difficult to discern the true character of the realities which encompass us. With what solemnities have we invested the event of Death! Yet how few comprehend its deep significance! And how slight is the impression which it leaves on the impetuous course of our selfish interests and vanities! Let us strip it, if we can, of the disguise which society has thrown around it, and contemplate it with simple truthfulness as a fact. It is the greatest and least understood of all the changes which await us. We may look at Death from the material or from the spiritual point of view. We may survey it from our position on earth, as the last link in a chain of visible phenomena—or from the higher elevation of faith, as the medium of transition to a new form of existence. Both these points

of view must be embraced, to obtain a full understanding of Death.

Let us first consider the several aspects which it presents to us, when regarded exclusively as the termination of the present state of things. Death, then, is a prepared, inevitable, necessary event. It has its appointed time. It is a change that must come. The seed of it is silently ripening in our constitution from the first. The physiologist could show us, that all the changes which take place in the human system from the hour of conception and birth, lead by unavoidable sequence to the last result of Death. Birth and Death have an indissoluble correlation :— they pre-suppose each other. A chain of invincible necessity connects these two extremes of our mortal life. Death has passed by irrevocable decree on all men. It is a sure consequence of the actual constitution of humanity.

The higher we ascend in the scale of terrestrial being, the more certain, speedy and calculable the event of final dissolution becomes. Revolutions in the great inorganic masses of the universe—the birth and death of a planet or of some geological era of coexistent life—occur only at vast intervals of time, and depend on laws which science has hitherto been unable to evolve. The great physical features of our globe bear on them a certain stamp of perpetuity. The mountains seem to have eternity written on their hoary brows. The prophet calls them everlasting. Next in order of longevity come certain products of the vegetable world. Oaks yet survive in our ancient woods, which tradition associates

with some incident in the history of our Norman or Plantagenet kings. Yews still cast their funereal shade on the very spot, where ages ago they probably witnessed the mystic rites of Druidic superstition.* Seeds that fell from the ripened ear on the banks of the Nile—long, it may be, ere Moses was deposited an unconscious babe among its sheltering reeds—if now committed to the soil, shoot up and wave their triple heads in our own fields—a wondrous instance of indestructible vitality. With the introduction of the higher powers of locomotion, sense, consciousness and intelligence, the term of duration is greatly diminished. The average of human years, even when the dangers of infancy and youth have been escaped, does not perhaps much exceed half a century.

In spite of the belief so widely diffused in the ancient world, that Death was the penalty of some early transgression, and that our first parents were destined to live for ever—that last change, viewed in relation to the present world, is a very merciful appointment. The removal of the individual is indispensable to the progress of the species. There would be no room for the expansion of our children's activity, if we did not at length retire and give way to them. Nor is this simply rendered necessary by

* 'I think we cannot avoid the conclusion, that many of the specimens of the yew which still survive, must have been planted long before the first promulgation of Christianity. Nay, some yews still standing are probably above 3,000 years old.'—'*On the Longevity of the Yew, &c.*' *By the late J. E. Bowman, Esq., F. L. S., communicated to Loudon's Magazine of Natural History*, Vol. i., N. S., p. 28.

the conditions of space and physical existence. We become in time morally disqualified for the new functions which the progress of events brings along with it. To fill our place and perform our part in the great procession of the ages, we put on the opinions and habitudes and adopt the insignia of the period to which we belong. Our individual being becomes incrusted, as it were, with the associations and even with the prejudices of our own time. Yet without such investment the spiritual nature would be cut off from all contact and intercourse with the men and things immediately around it. It thus forms an effectual link between the past and the future. By beliefs and sentiments partial and defective in themselves, but of great relative value, it is fastened and rivetted to its appointed place in the moral machinery of the world. This machinery itself undergoes a constant change. Through a plastic vitality wrought into it by God, it unwinds and unfolds itself from day to day, to meet new exigencies and bring a larger range of objects within its operation. While our powers continue active, we should strive to grow with the times, and transfer our sympathies to the new interests that are perpetually arising. But this is only possible within certain limits. Early associations imprint themselves indelibly on the mind. Convictions that were in harmony with the narrower circle of men's ideas when we were young—must be themselves transformed by the ejection of old elements and the admission of new, to be any longer applicable to the altered conditions of the great problems which still

remain for the solution of mankind. Old men are incapable of so entire a change. Perhaps physical causes may prevent it. With the decline of activity and the growing obtuseness of the senses, observation and comparison of outward phenomena become less easy; and without a vivid impression of new facts, the formation of new opinions is impossible. The tenacity with which earlier acquirements are grasped and the large space which they occupy in the mind, when they become fixed and petrified under the hardening action of length of years—hinder the accumulation of new elements of thought and the moulding of older materials into another form. When men outlive their interests and affections in this world, and merely prolong a physical existence in another generation, they have a lonely and desolate look, and remind us of the solitary leaf of a former summer, which may sometimes be seen, sere and wrinkled, quivering forlorn and ready to drop at every breath of wind, amidst the fresh budding life of a new spring.

Death is not only a necessity that must occur after a certain term, but a casualty dependent on a thousand small events that may happen at any moment. Its possibility and its constant proximity are feelings that enter into all our contemplations of Death. Life is beset with perils at every turn: and Death differs in one respect from every other chance to which we are exposed. When the blow is once struck, the effect is remediless. Death puts us for ever beyond the reach of all the resources of human art. There are varieties, too, in what may be called

the natural term of human years. Some constitutions are exhausted and come to an inevitable dissolution at an earlier age than others. So again localities and employments differ in their effect on the duration of life. Longevity distinguishes particular families and particular races. Purer manners and more healthful habits might possibly increase the average length of years, and even extend it to a century. But though by our follies and our vices we may accelerate the approach of Death, we cannot indefinitely postpone it. Every thing in man himself, and in the world about him, proves that the perpetuation of our individual existence on earth is an impossibility. The last change must come. It is gradually but unerringly announced to us, and we are warned to prepare. The signs of bloom and maturity pass imperceptibly away. The limbs contract and bend. The step loses its elasticity, and the head its erectness. The voice becomes feeble and tremulous: and a few hairs, white and thin, replace the shining tresses that hung on the maiden's delicate neck, and the flowing locks that once waved over the brawny shoulders of manhood. Thus, when accident and disease are averted, the event does not come upon us as a shock, but we calmly anticipate the final disappearance of the form which has already lost its pristine fullness and glow of life, in the dissolving shade of Death. And these things come with gentle and timely admonition, to remind us, that our work is done, and that the hour will soon strike for our retirement to endless rest.

Limiting our view to the visible phenomena of

present scenes, there is a total failure of all ground of inference from any cognizable fact—as to the possible sequel of Death. All human facts, with the conclusions deducible from them—except such as are contained in our perpetual consciousness—belong to the past alone. Birth indeed is a mystery, but it is not so entirely inexplicable as Death. Of birth we know some of the antecedents, and all the more important consequents. Of Death we know the antecedents alone. All that is properly creative —the energy present at the generative point of time, when life and sense and intellect begin to unfold their mysterious germs—this we cannot explain, because it brings us into direct contact with the unsearchable power of God. But we do know the outward conditions of birth and of the subsequent evolution of the powers which it puts in action. From our knowledge of the nature and combination of these conditions, we can in some measure account for much that is peculiar and characteristic in the life of the individual. Human lineage is spread out before us in the past. We can sometimes discover the seeds of genius in the temperament of parents and the hereditary bias of a race. History in its great facts is a certainty. Its principles are known; its laws can be stated; its consequences may be educed. But all this ceases at Death. Here absolute ignorance awaits us. 'They were, and they are not,' is the utmost that the light of science enables us to affirm of our departed friends. The future is a vast, impenetrable unknown, where con-

jecture, analogy, hope alone enable us to shape out a few dim, uncertain forms of possible truth.

What then are the practical results for life and opinion, deducible from this aspect of the change of Death? How will the wise man contemplate it?—He will learn to anticipate with tranquillity an event which he sees is inevitable. He will adopt the sentiment of the heathen poet, that 'whatever cannot be averted, becomes more endurable by patience.' * He will exercise submission and fortitude in the face of approaching certainty. Prudence will dictate the avoidance of all unnecessary risks: though this consideration, even where all distinct hope of a future after death is wanting, may be, as it often has been, overborne by stronger impulses and more generous motives. He will study the preservation of his health and his strength, of his outward senses and his intellectual faculties—under the feeling that these are blessings which must soon pass away. He will endeavour to divest Death of all unreal terrors, and encounter that last enemy with the calm and cheerful spirit which some irreligious philosophers have been able to display, when they were already on the brink of the grave. His predominant feeling will be—and he will try to reconcile himself to it—that nothing is known of the state into which he is about to pass—whether his personal consciousness will survive or perish—and that at the utmost a renovation of his individual existence is not impossible. Beyond this point the philosophy of the

* "....levius fit patientiâ
Quicquid corrigere est nefas.—*Hor. Carm.* i. 24.

world—simple naturalism—cannot go. It accepts the actual world, as a final, completed fact—only to be interpreted by laws contained within itself, and an analogy that never transcends the limits of their visible operation. Does this view of life, with all the aid which reason and philosophy can bring to its support—suffice for the inward contentment of your spirit? Does it yield the pure and perfect peace which you feel you want, in the consciousness of nature's decline, and when the sorrow of bereavement lies heavy on your heart?

Let us turn, then, to another—the spiritual—view of this subject. Let us keep the same phenomena before us, but place them in a different light. We look now on the actual world, not as an ultimate fact, but as itself only the partial expression of a still higher fact—a Supreme Intelligence—a Divine Mind. New elements are thus brought into the question, and wider premises supplied for drawing our conclusions. When Mind is assumed as the fundamental reality of all things, we are justified in taking as a ground for our reasoning, those attributes of rectitude and benevolence, which are laws necessarily resulting from the nature of mind, and without which it could not operate or even exist. Such attributes in an Infinite Mind, exempt from all possible causes of error or disturbance, must be absolutely perfect.—What a new aspect Death assumes, when viewed in reference to the government of such a Being—as a part of the system which He has constituted for the spiritual nurture and discipline of the soul! We no more behold it now in the cold

contracted gloom of earth, but in the broad and genial light cast upon it from a higher sphere. We have secured ground and raised ourselves to a point of view, which the mere contemplation of external phenomena could never furnish. Setting out from spiritual facts of which our own consciousness is the witness, and which are reflected back upon it with redoubled strength and clearness from the great embodiment of them in the word and work and person of Christ—we find a solid basis for trust in the infinite wisdom and infinite love of the Sovereign Mind. Mind is the only foundation for trust. We cannot put confidence in mere law. We cannot rely on a simple process. Law and process awaken sympathy and inspire faith, only as indications of the living Spirit from which they emanate.

Conceive of the universe, then—in accordance with the fundamental truth of Christianity—as a vast communion of minds, embraced and governed by One above all, that is absolutely perfect. Fully realise to yourself this idea. You will find it pregnant with consolation and support, in view of every change that can overtake the life of individual man. Infinite wisdom and infinite love! Are these indeed the principles which guide the destinies of creation? If you once accept the doctrine of a God, the conclusion is inevitable. Take it, then, without distrust, and admit all the comfort which it bears along with it, into your inmost soul. If you are but true to the inward law of your being, the Father will bestow on you in death, as in life, all the good which is compatible with the highest happiness of his whole

creation. More, as a devoted and affectionate child, you cannot desire. Into His hands you commit yourself in the last great crisis of your mortal existence. He has never once forsaken you in the changes of life. He will not forsake you now. This is our broadest, surest ground of trust—the perfect wisdom and goodness of God. It is the ground on which we feel more disposed to rely, the longer we live: so as to resolve all our faith at last into the single principle of implicit self-surrender to the Father's will.

When such a faith has penetrated the soul, and become a vital, actuating principle throughout the character—it quickens the spiritual vision, and gives force and significance to minor considerations which viewed by themselves might each separately have little weight, but embraced as parts of an organic whole, all intimately related to the central belief, produce a deep and self-consistent impression. Consider in this view that law of progress and development which pervades the visible universe. Why should this be excluded from the region of mind? It will be said, perhaps, that the development which we can trace on a retrospect of the past changes of our planet, has resulted from the succession of new and distinct orders of being, and not from the continuous transition of the same order—still less of the separate members of that order—into higher forms: and that with regard to man, while the species surveyed through long periods of time, seem to be steadily on the advance, the individual does his work, and perishes. But it is the peculiar relation

of the individual to the species which makes the great and important difference in the case of man. In him first we find the species progressive. If inferior species have undergone any improvement with the march of civilisation, it is due entirely to his influence. They only reflect in their physical condition, the progression of his intelligence. But here is the singularity to be noticed. The life of individual men as it exists on earth—even when all accident is averted, and external circumstances allow its amplest development, and it is extended to its longest term—never looks like a completed whole. It only contributes its quota to the ever-enlarging idea of the species. Collective humanity at any one period of its existence, is no adequate expression of the ultimate tendencies of the race. Whereas, among the lower animals, while the species is stationary, the individuals embraced in it at a particular time, realise completely the specific type. We have thus in mankind the curious example of a whole constantly tending towards perfection, while the several parts of which it is made up, are each in itself imperfect, and fall below the idea which they collectively suggest. The exceptional character of man's condition on earth, presents a phenomenon best explicable—to those at least who believe in a God—on the supposition, that he is here only in the infancy of an immortal existence.

What is the experience of the most virtuous and richly endowed mind at the close of the most successful career? It is conscious of plans unaccomplished, of resources undeveloped, of energies unex-

hausted, of impulses and aspirations which have never reached their term, and to which no term seems capable of being assigned. Altogether disproportionate to the actual conditions of our physical existence are the inherent capacities and the outward and upward strugglings of the captive spirit. The short period allowed for the development of the human faculties, compared with the richness and variety of the fruits they often yield and their constant promise of powers still latent within—so different from the vast spaces of time through which inferior forms of life have preserved an unaltered type of being with no indication of progress—warrants the inference that men may be sufficiently ripened during the few short years of their terrestrial sojourn, for an ensuing stage of existence, which is invisible because it belongs to a higher sphere and is inconceivably wonderful and glorious. There is much hidden in all men, which requires a transference into new scenes for its complete manifestation. Those flashes of marvellous light which sometimes break forth under strong excitement from the dullest minds—the profound foresight and sagacity which very ordinary men have been known to display when motives of unusual force have been applied to them—point to the existence of dormant faculties which, unless God can be supposed to have over-furnished the soul for its appointed field of action, seem only to be awaiting more favourable circumstances, to awaken and disclose themselves.

The notion of the ancients, that Death was a consequence and penalty of sin, involves an inversion of

the proper order of ideas, since it sends us to the Past for the solution we should seek in the Future: but it has its weight as expressing a profound conviction of the human mind, that Death viewed as the final extinction of conscious activity, is something out of harmony with the natural worth and dignity of the soul, and therefore marks a passage, either as descent or ascent, from one state of existence to another. Then—there are our affections. What a light their strength and tenderness throw, when purified by deep trust in God, on the possibilities of that unknown future beyond the grave! For here immortality offers the consolation which the best men most strongly need. The purer, and kinder and truer the heart, the keener the pang of final separation. In all other cases, there is some compensation for unavoidable loss. Here—if immortality be a baseless dream—there is absolutely none. In all other cases, the better a man is, the more he carries a consolation in his own breast. Here, the better he is, the deeper and more incurable is his wound. Here only, in the chill desolation of unbelief, the best would find it the most difficult to say from the heart, 'Thy will be done.'

The failure of all positive knowledge—all proof founded on fact—respecting the Future, is of no importance in the view which Religion opens before us. It could only be so, on the assumption, that the next life was a mere prolongation of the present, physically as well as spiritually; since physical phenomena might be expected to yield physical evidence. On our present ground, such failure merely

indicates that the transition is into a spiritual world, and involves a continuance of that invisible life existing wholly within the mind, which outward sense cannot apprehend and on which outward facts have no necessary bearing. Even were the Future conceivable by us here, a fuller revelation of it might only overwhelm our faculties and interfere with the quiet and humble discharge of present duties. Our business is to hope and trust and prepare. Faith not science is the discipline of the soul for the heavenly world. Hence the testimony of the highest consciousness and the purest spiritual experience has a value above every other kind of evidence on this subject. The solemn declarations of those who have lived in habitual intimacy with God, and exercised their spiritual vision continually on the vital relations between their souls and Him—are here of inestimable moment, and far outweigh any deductions of science from outward phenomena. For they, like Christ, according to their measure of insight, 'speak that they do know, and testify that they have seen.' Theirs is, in a spiritual sense, belief founded on experience.

Hence the authority which on this awful subject, attaches to the words of Christ. His was a life wholly united with God. The Spirit of the Father filled its veins and vibrated in every fibre. The power of immortality pervaded its inmost depths, and breathed forth in every word and act. Christ wins our hearts and commands our faith as the spiritual Ideal of our nature; and Humanity as expressed and interpreted by him, is evidently but

a wayfarer on earth, and belongs by its capacities and affections to a state which is yet to come. This silent, implicit, unceasing witness to a higher life, emanating from the person and work of Christ and investing them with the light of another world, is to some minds—I confess it is to mine—a clearer indication of immortality and carries with it a deeper conviction, than the single fact of his resurrection, however powerful the evidence on which it rests. The resurrection of Jesus is a fact which stands by itself, and offers no points of parallel and comparison with our own spiritual condition. It brings with it no testimonies and no assurances that we can personally realise. We know in consequence of it no more of the circumstances of the invisible world, that we knew before. Its certainty too can never exceed the highest attestation possible to an historical event. It does not come home to us like a fact of consciousness. Its chief value is as an outward and visible exponent of the deeper faith that lies enshrined in the recesses of every human spirit. According to this view, it is not the resurrection which produces a belief in immortality, but the belief in immortality which renders credible a resurrection. Far different is the effect of Christ's living personality on our hearts. With perfect confidence, we feel that we could live and die with him. The appropriation of his spirit is the warrant of our eternal salvation. One instructive lesson, however, we may draw from the evangelical records of his resurrection;—not to indulge our imaginations in vain pictures of the possible scenes of the future world. We

can know nothing of them; and faith is not strengthened nor virtue aided by gratuitous creations. Christ died, and rose again, and went to heaven. Such is the sum total of the information conveyed to us: and it suffices for our fullest trust. We know, that we shall pass through death into another and more glorious state of being, and that our departed friends have gone thither before us. In this simple but sublime assurance let us rest content. Let trust in God be our great support; and as we descend into the shade which hovers on the verge of terrestrial things, let memory melt into hope, and the reflected hues of our best and happiest hours on earth mingle in one bright bow of peace over the solemn passage which separates time from eternity.

XX.

RETROSPECT AND ANTICIPATION.

(Delivered December 29th, 1850.)

PSALM, xlviii. 12, 13.

"Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof.

"Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces: that ye may tell it to the generation following."

IN a few days we shall complete the first half of the nineteenth century; and we cannot bid farewell to so large a portion of human history without deep and earnest thought. The Past that we are leaving, connects itself with the Future which is to come; and while the impression lasts, we seem conscious of our movement on the mighty stream of ages. Many are now living—some may be with us to-day—whose hands will write 1900 ere they die, and who are destined to live into the century that will terminate the second thousand of years from the commencement of our Christian civilisation. It is a solemn position that we now occupy—in the very middle of a century. A more fitting occasion could not offer for retrospect and anticipation.

The present century is one of the most remarkable in the annals of mankind, and will doubtless

be classed by future historians with those eras which have exercised the most powerful influence on the condition and destinies of our race:—the diffusion of arts and literature and a common medium of intellectual intercourse by Greek and Roman arms;—the promulgation of Christianity;—the immigration of Teutonic and Slavonic races into western Europe;—the Reformation with its attendant agencies;—if indeed that event be not rather the proper commencement of our actual state, and all that has happened subsequent to it, one great progressive change in which we are still involved, and whose final issue it baffles human sagacity to conjecture. One broad general feature characterises the civilisation of this last period, and distinguishes it from every preceding one — the growing importance of the popular element in Society, and the assumption by the associated energies of vast masses of men, of that directing influence in human affairs, which was once exclusively exercised by a few commanding intellects. This tendency is daily becoming more conspicuous. It is one of the signs of the age; and its deep significance all who reflect on it, must perceive.—Let us now take a rapid survey of the principal events that have contributed to social amelioration and indicate mental progress, during the fifty years which are on the point of their completion.

The nineteenth century opened amidst the storms of a revolutionary war which exposed this country to the combined hostility of Europe, organised and wielded by the extraordinary man who had bound the writhings of a frenzied liberty by his despotic

spell, and whose name many of us are old enough to remember as a word of terror at our domestic hearths. Ambition grew drunk with success, and precipitated its own downfall. A general pacification of Europe was the immediate result; and thousands believed, they had reached the happy close of an age of convulsion, which would be signalised by the restoration of order and law, and the establishment throughout Europe of constitutional government and a wise freedom. This is not the place to remark, how wofully such expectations have been disappointed, and how want of faith on the part of sovereigns to their subjects, has dispersed the elements of future storms. Our attention is rather called to the more fortunate direction of events in our own island. During the period of comparative tranquillity which followed the termination of the war, the arts of peace revived—intercourse between England and the continent was resumed—men of different countries freely exchanged their ideas—education was extended—science and learning were prosecuted with vigour, and industry in all its branches experienced an immense development. And now set in among ourselves that course of wise and timely reformation, which so often in our history—some would say, by a happy accident—some, through the conservative instinct and quiet energy of our national character—some, and more correctly, by the good providence of God—has interposed to ward off the convulsive change and violent disorganisation which remedy deferred and accumulated abuse must have inevitably brought on.

We owe much to the mixture of elements in our legislature. If the preponderance of the aristocratic sometimes obstructs and delays measures beyond the point which the ardent and sanguine have fixed as the utmost limit of their patient endurance, it secures to every change projected the completest investigation before it is introduced, and gives strength and solidity to the final result. Between the extreme sections of political opinion—represented, on one hand, by those who uphold every thing as it exists in Church and State and only yield at last to irresistible necessity, and on the other by those who are imbued with the spirit of innovation and would immediately re-construct the social fabric to meet their theoretic ideas—there has ever existed a large and powerful middle party, adorned by our noblest historical names and associated with the remembrance of all our great constitutional struggles, which owns the claims at once of progress and conservatism—which loves and honours the Past, yet not as a dead finality, but the living womb of new developments and a richer Future. To the exertions of this party we are indebted for most of those measures during the last half century, on which the friends of humanity now look back with the greatest satisfaction. Upright and patriotic men have ever been found in all the divisions of party, whose virtues and services must not be forgotten: but it is characteristic of England and ominous of its calm and steady progress in future years, that the changes through which we have passed, have not hitherto been effected by men of extreme opinions on either side, but directly

or indirectly through the moral force of the great intermediate party, which seems best to embody and express the indwelling genius of our constitution.

At the commencement of this century, Slavery was a legal institution and the Slave-trade a recognised traffic in the British dominions: industry was fettered by restrictions and perverted by monopolies: Protestant Dissenters and Catholics were treated as aliens to the constitution, shut out from its privileges and distinctions, and only sheltered from persecution by a meagre toleration: our legislature expressed almost exclusively the feelings and interests of the aristocratic class, who commanded its votes, and filled or disposed of numbers of its seats as their private property; while the vast amount of talent and energy and public spirit nursed in the bosom of trade and commerce, found in it no fitting and adequate representation. These were galling evils against which the popular mind, as it grew in conscious power and intelligence, chafed and fretted, and might have broken out in destructive rebellion, had not the due remedy come in time, and one after another of the possible occasions of revolution been taken away. And the change was not brought to pass by violence. The moderate party mediating between extreme tendencies, by the energetic exercise of constitutional powers, without shedding one drop of human blood, peacefully accomplished the needful transition. By that party, the Slave-trade and Slavery itself were abolished; the Protestant Dissenters were invested with their full political rights—the Established Church simply retaining

under the control of the State, its ancient revenues and dignities and its parliamentary representation; —the Legislature was reformed and purified, and a large popular element infused into its composition. The disabilities of the Catholics were not indeed removed, nor was commerce liberated from its heaviest fetters, by the immediate act of the same party; yet such a policy became practicable, in consequence of preparations which they had made, through the influence of principles which they had diffused, or by instrumentalities which their reforms had called into existence: and it was their cordial support which carried those measures into effect, when introduced by their political opponents. Such, on the whole, is the gratifying retrospect of the last half century. It bears witness to repeated efforts in the direction of civil, religious and industrial freedom, and to the growing power and extension of just and humane principles. The whole period too has been marked by a rapid dissemination of knowledge and intelligence among the mass of the people—by some abatement of political and sectarian antipathies—by the constant increase of schools and the adoption of more enlightened methods of instruction—by exertions to improve the social and sanitary condition of the lower classes—and by the rise of a new and most influential form of literature—without precedent in former times—popular in its origin, its aim and its effects.

Has the result corresponded to the effort? Looking forward into the next half century, do we foresee, that the more unfettered powers and ampler

resources of good delivered to us from the Past, will be counterbalanced by new dangers and heavier responsibilities, and by some agencies of evil that were unknown in ruder and less enlightened times? Good and evil are inextricably intermingled in this life; and it is the condition of any great and rapid development of the means and instruments of good, to engender along with them some fresh and more active seeds of evil. A considerable interval must usually elapse before new principles yield their natural fruit. Ages passed ere Christianity met with a congenial element and suitable materials, and could display its genuine and proper energy. During the first centuries of its existence, it operated with a destructive force on the old civilisation, and some noble intellects strenuously resisted it as a principle of disorganisation and decay. It must not, therefore, be concluded, that progress has reached its limits, or come to a stand, because the effect of some changes which it cost our predecessors immense efforts and sacrifices to produce, has not hitherto fulfilled expectation, but left many evils to be encountered among their immediate results. We should rather find in these things an incentive to deeper thoughtfulness and a wiser energy.

In many of the circumstances which at a first glance we should naturally single out as peculiarly indicative of the superior civilisation of the nineteenth century, we discern on a closer inspection some qualifying disadvantage, some counterbalancing evil, which—now that the achievement is over and we are waiting for the result—forces itself daily in

broader and distincter characters on our view, as a part of the coming trial and discipline of the next fifty years.—We speak, for example, with pride and enthusiasm of the wonderful progress of modern science: and if the observation be limited to those departments which embrace the laws and properties of matter, and admit the exact measurement and calculation of the mathematics, no language can mark in too decided terms our unquestionable superiority. Here the successes and discoveries of the moderns are truly marvellous. Nature relinquishes the contest with man, and seems on the point of yielding up her most hidden secrets and submitting her subtlest agencies to his control. But in inquiries which have man himself for their object—the laws of his mental organisation, the modes of his culture and government, and the whole range of his social relations—it cannot be affirmed, that our advance has been at all proportionate, or that there is by any means that difference between ourselves and the ancients, which the distance of time separating us, would have rendered probable. If we turn to what is called the higher philosophy, we find ourselves in few directions much advanced beyond the point which men had reached ages ago. The great intellects of the Past still maintain their ascendancy, and share the empire of modern opinion between them. In theology, notwithstanding that we live in the light of Christianity, we are still tied up in narrow systems, spell-bound by words and phrases, prejudiced, bigoted, and averse from thorough and fundamental search after truth. Among the educated

classes of this country, I fear it must be added, that there is now less manly freedom of mind, less openness to conviction, and a more slavish dread of public opinion, than at the same period in the last century. In almost every path of metaphysical speculation, in nearly all the higher questions of ethical science, even in the latest theories of social organisation, we have been anticipated by the ancient schools.* On subjects of the utmost importance to human well-being and happiness, we are yet without clear first principles and in the very rudiments of knowledge. Perhaps political economy is the only branch of moral investigation that approaches in its definitions and conclusions to scientific exactness, and indicates a transition from the vagueness of ancient methods to the precision required by modern intellect. The strongest tendencies of the age are unfavourable to habits of abstract thought and pure reasoning. The unparalleled success which has crowned our researches into the physical world, with immediate opportunity for endless practical application, captivates the popular judgment with obvious evidence of positive usefulness, and draws away attention from those dimmer realms of mind where problems of unspeakable moment are still awaiting their solution. Our science, therefore, wonderful and glo-

* Hemsterhuis, profoundly versed in the philosophy of antiquity, thought the moderns had struck out nothing new. 'In Metaphysicâ quæ vera certaque sint, et in quibus firme consistere possis, apud veteres se reperisse omnia dicebat—ubique cum admiratione quadam deprehendens permulta, quæ ætatis nostræ vanitas audet ut recens inventa jactare.'—*D. Ruhnkenii Elog. Tib. Hemsterhus*, p. 14.

rious as it is, has yet its dark side. It overshadows, and almost blinds us to, wide fields of human thought, where great minds once gathered, as great minds, we trust, will hereafter gather, the rarest fruits of spiritual wisdom.

In the popular communication and vast diffusion of knowledge, we have another prominent feature of our time—ominous of good, but not without its qualification. What is gained in breadth, is sometimes lost in depth. Too many objects are crowded at once upon the mind. Rest and leisure are not left for concentrated thought. Practical results are too promptly demanded. Inquiry is not prolonged with sufficient patience and continuity; and the conclusion is more prized for its susceptibility of immediate application, than for its warrant of enduring value. Authors dare not reckon on close and sustained attention in the generality of their readers. The public insist on entertainment, and will be instructed without trouble. Knowledge is brought up to them, and made easy of comprehension. They have no difficulty in finding where it lies, and can appropriate without any great effort of thought, so much of it as they need for the ordinary intercourse of society. There is much that is excellent in all this; but, unless counteracted by some other influence, its tendency is to produce a general level of intellect. Old persons have remarked a decline of originality of character since their younger days. There are fewer than formerly without some opinion derived from newspapers and reviews and popular summaries of information—without something to

say on the many topics that are now discussed among men; but perhaps there are fewer still who have laboriously collected knowledge for themselves, and wrought out of native materials a judgment truly their own. There are amongst us now fewer meditative and comprehensive intellects. Fewer works are produced of high aim and wide range, combining severe thought with deep research. A few splendid exceptions it would be easy to specify in a Grote, a Macaulay and a Mill; but I speak of general tendency. Our very poetry and fiction are reduced in form and lighter in character, floating in a serial stream through the pages of a magazine, and adapted to the wants and tastes of the numerous and increasing class who can only snatch a few moments in the hurried intervals of business, for their mental culture and gratification. The counteraction which the age itself might supply, should be found in its application of increased stimulus to the talent, genius and intellectual vigour of the humbler classes, and its infusion of a new life from this source into the educated mind of the country. But there is danger of this wild growth being absorbed in the widespread superficiality and exhausted by premature and unmeasured production. Spirits of generous quality, especially among the poor, our grammar-schools and universities were originally intended to receive into their bosom, and train up in exact discipline and severe scholarship for the higher functions of society. Unhappily they impose conditions which the noblest will not accept. May we live to witness a reform, that will turn them once

more into their destined channel and make them national again!

Immense good has resulted to society from the increasing preponderance of the industrial over the feudal spirit. It is one of those general tendencies in which every friend of humanity must rejoice. Habits of order and thrift and forethought and the love of peace are among its most obvious advantages. Its working is announced to the very eye in the growth of towns and facilities of inter-communication, in the decay of the moated manor-house and the baronial castle, and the gradual disappearance of our ancient forests. But with this change so beneficial on the whole, a cautious and calculating spirit grows up, which takes material interests too prominently into account—which in its exclusive regard for the practical, recoils perhaps too far from the proud romance of ancient honour and high-mindedness—and, when questions of simple justice and humanity present themselves, is too much disposed to ask in the first place, what will be the probable effect of any movement in their favour, on the worth of investments, the return to capital, or the activity of trade. I do not say, that such inquiries are improper, or that a far-sighted benevolence is not often involved in them; but they indicate a spirit which may easily become too strong, and should be watched with jealousy.

Kindred tendencies are fostered by the love of ease and luxury, and the extreme sensitiveness to advantages of social position, which the diffused wealth attendant on a high civilisation never fails to

produce. The soft and polished citizen of the nineteenth century, shrinks from the thought of toils and sacrifices which his hardier and less enlightened ancestors would have incurred without hesitation for some cherished belief or fancied question of right. He will not forsake his own warm hearth and well-spread board, to assert some abstract principle which has no bearing that he can discern, on the material interests of the actual world. Nor does the fashionable religion of the day oppose any effectual check to these enervating influences. It has purged off the roughness and sternness of past times, and become effeminate and sentimental. It deals in feeling and plays with the imagination, but dares not appeal to reason and will not throw itself courageously on first principles. Its teachers are no longer disciplined in the exercises of earnest thought and fearless inquiry. Vigour and originality of mind have ceased to characterize our English theology. It subsists on the accumulated fruits of more laborious generations. It has forsaken the study for the platform; and pulpits that once resounded to the homely and vehement but masculine eloquence of Latimer or Knox, now overflow with a mawkish tenderness of sensibility. God is made less merciful than man. Terror and vengeance are cast into the future world. Unbounded compassion and a softness that shrinks from any infliction of pain, become the ruling law of this. The mind cannot endure the presence of suffering, and hastens to relieve it without investigating its causes. The retributions of Providence are intercepted in their effect. More

interest is felt, and more active benevolence is exerted, for the convict in his cell, than for many a good and quiet man who keeps within the limits of social duty and has never violated the laws of his country. The profligate and selfish who throw their children on the community, have a larger share in our sympathies and are better provided for by our legislation, than the poor and honest father of a family who asks help from no one, and by hard industry just keeps himself in decent independence. Christian brotherhood—that holiest of words—is degraded into a cant. All our sensibilities are to be expended on the diseased and corrupt members of the human family. Pain and misery must not be permitted to exist. Man's life must be preserved at whatever cost. Every other interest of humanity must be sacrificed to inviolable peace. No war upon freedom, no tyranny over conscience, no trampling on the most sacred rights—can authorise an armed resistance and weigh against the guilt of any possible effusion of blood. Such are doctrines widely promulgated at the present day. We may congratulate ourselves on the increase of our humanity; but let us take care, that we do not drivel and dote in expressing it.

We may notice, I think, as a general result of the tendencies now described, a certain decline of heroic spirit in the national mind. Enthusiasm evaporates in the prevalent disposition to look only at what is called the practical side of a question, and in a fancied superiority to what are deemed the visionary crotchets of bye-gone days. Men will risk nothing

that they can help. They will no longer contend for words, forgetting that the greatest truths have often no visible exponent but words. They have allayed their passions and dismissed their prejudices; it may be questioned, whether they have always put principles in their place, and whether sometimes they do not mistake selfishness for wisdom. With the habits of mind that now so extensively pervade the community—if the grand struggle of the seventeenth century were to come over again, we may doubt, whether an equal number of men could be found in any class to make the same efforts and sacrifices for their convictions—whether our country-gentlemen could furnish an Elliot, a Hampden, or a Pym—whether our present race of farmers could send forth a yeomanry like the Iron-sides of Cromwell—whether Leeds and Manchester now would make the same determined stand for a spiritual principle, as Hull and Bristol then. It was well for our liberties, that the rough and bloody conflict necessary for achieving them, came on in the natural order of events, before civilisation had made our people too polished and too speculative to fight for them: and it is unfortunate for other countries, as yet in the throes of constitutional development, that the culture of art and science has with them anticipated the birth of freedom.

Secure in our insular position and satisfied with our inheritance of freedom, we listen perhaps too readily to the counsels of the selfish policy, which bids us attend to our own interests and take no part in the effort to promote good government and aid

social progress abroad. But is it possible for any one member of the great European family, so completely to separate itself from all the rest? If freedom perishes on the continent, what will become of it among ourselves? What will become of our trade and our commerce—even admitting these to be the only interests with which our foreign policy has any concern—should an absolute despotism establish its crushing rule over the whole of Europe? I am aware of the extreme delicacy of this question —and the difficulty of deciding, how far the sympathies of political relationship should extend, and where they should stop. Doubtless, we are right in checking the meddlesome and pugnacious propensities which have so often heretofore involved us in unavailing and ruinous warfare: but there is a point where indifference ceases to be sound and even pacific policy, and becomes ungenerous and inhuman. We must take care, that the economical doctrine of non-interference does not extinguish in us all sympathy for the oppressed, and all enthusiasm for the principle of truth and right.

Every Christian believes, that universal peace, cemented by the spirit of brotherhood, is the ultimate destiny of the human race, and the issue to which all true civilisation tends. But hard conditions are attached by Providence to our choicest blessings. We must not prematurely maim the indispensable process, in vainly forestalling the result. We must not mistake the distant visions of a prophetic spirit, for the stern necessities of our actual world. The instinct of self-defence is implanted in

us by God. We must distinguish between the arm that assails, and the arm that defends, human rights. The hosts that would lay waste our civilisation, are not to be confounded with those that are embattled to preserve and perpetuate it. It is false humanity, from the dread of momentary suffering, to prefer the slow consuming malady which cherishes the seeds of future strife, to the brief agony of conflict which may be the necessary preliminary of a safe and lasting peace. There are few incidents in our history, on which a generous mind reflects with more satisfaction, than Cromwell's noble interposition to shield the poor Protestants of the Alps from the persecutions of the House of Savoy. If the great prince who headed our Revolution, has been censured for involving England too deeply in continental wars, can it be doubted, on a broader view, that the preservation of civil and religious liberty in Europe, depended on the resistance which he helped to make effectual against the bigoted and despotic domination of France? In our own days, before our very eyes, we have seen two brave and noble-minded nations—one struggling for its ancient franchises, a natural bulwark against barbarism in eastern Europe—the other, in the heart of Germany, a perfect model of calm and constitutional opposition to wrong—overpowered by force and trampled out of their political existence, without one arm stretched forth to help them, and only a voice here and there to compassionate and bewail their fall. Such a spectacle fills the heart with a profound sadness and almost shakes one's faith in the ultimate destinies of hu-

manity. Gloomy indeed in the eye of every lover of his kind are the present aspects of Europe. Dark and evil powers are in the ascendant, preparing to cast their baleful shade over the ancient abodes of science and religious freedom. Tyranny and priesthood seem to be recovering their ancient sway. The chances of the future waver between anarchy and despotism. Enthusiasm for what is great and noble sickens and dies in the chill of perpetual disappointment. Efforts constantly abortive have plucked hope and courage from the popular heart. Want of faith in God and in truth is at the bottom of that moral weakness and exhaustion which has laid so much knowledge and intelligence prostrate at the feet of their oppressors.

For ourselves, there is happily much to preserve us from a similar catastrophe, in the freedom and activity of our religious life; and if we can only keep up amongst us in all its strength the old Puritan spirit of independence and honesty, it will bear us safely through all our difficulties and straits. But in this quarter also, we are not without danger, and we must submit to have plain and unpalatable truths spoken to us. We congratulate ourselves as Protestant Dissenters, on our improved social position, and the more liberal and friendly tone that pervades the intercourse of different sects. But the change, desirable as it is, has not been one of pure gain to the cause of Christian truth and liberty. Less persecuted from without, we are more open to insidious and corrupting influences from within. As we have become more easy, we have become more indifferent.

As we have less to struggle for, we seem to have less to preserve. Our peculiar principles are less precious to us, in the same degree that they are less openly attacked. Meanwhile foreign attractions act with increasing force on our loose and scattered ranks. Conviction gives way to the influence of fashion. Precedent, authority, appeals to the imagination and the feelings, worldly considerations—are continually absorbing numbers into the great vortex of the national establishment, without the removal or diminution of one objection which has long excluded the most conscientious minds from its communion, or the failure of one main argument that has justified for nearly two hundred years the independent existence of Protestant Dissent. Our liberality softens into laxity, and so takes without resistance the impression of the world's opinion and law. In their sensitiveness to public censure, men hesitate to think and act for themselves on a subject of all others the most important, and where opinion to be of any value, must be a personal conviction. In their excess of refinement, they shrink from the alleged vulgarity of Dissent, wholly unconscious of the far deeper vulgarity—a vulgarity which taints the inmost soul—of putting rank and fashion and the mere accidents of social position, in competition with the eternal claims of truth and uprightness.

Among the facts of our time, of vast import in its bearing on the Future, is that great fact of our National Church—so interwoven with our whole history and constitution, and furnished with so vast an apparatus of instrumentalities for evil or for good.

How must we deal with it? Must it remain as it is? Must it be destroyed? Must it be reformed? The two first alternatives would prove—at least in their immediate consequences—perhaps equally calamitous to the cause of truth and the healthful growth of the popular mind. The third might not, in any form that it could now possibly take, meet all the objections of conscientious minds, or succeed in dissolving within the bosom of one comprehensive communion, the invidious distinction of Church and Dissent. But such a step (if still possible) would be the first and the safest towards a more perfect constitution of religious society, and most in harmony with that principle of historical development which pervades the working of all our institutions. To effect such a change, earnestness and consistency are required in all religious professors. Religion must become a conviction, and cease to be a question of fashion. Those within the Church who are dissatisfied with her discipline and disbelieve her formularies, must courageously come out of her and take the consequences, till she is reformed and purified. Those who are not of the Church, but have been nursed in sounder doctrine and a freer spirit, must not pusillanimously steal into her, while their convictions and her creeds continue unchanged, because some worldly disadvantage may still attach to honest profession, and vulgar minds cannot understand the true nobleness of a manly and courageous assertion of principle. If all in time past who knew the right, had only done the right, an over-

powering force of public opinion would long ago have compelled reform; the Church would have been spared her corruptions; and Dissent, instead of being stigmatised, would have been honoured for its martyrdom.

What we most need to avert the dangers and meet the wants of the present condition of society, and perpetuate a steady, healthful progress through the remainder of the century—is the revival of a noble and disinterested zeal for all things right and true and beautiful—for justice and liberty and social renovation all over the earth—for depth, solidity and thoroughness of knowledge—for high excellence in moral character and mental accomplishment—for simple-minded truthfulness and courageous honesty of religious profession. If liberty is to survive its dangers—if truth is to vanquish its obstacles—if pure and hearty religion is again to fill men's souls with spiritual life—it is to you whose minds and characters now ripening towards maturity, must furnish the moral elements of the next fifty years, that the world will look for the progressive achievement of those blessings, which it has long conceived and desired, but as yet has been unable to realise. Go forth, then, to this great work with every auspicious omen from the half century which you are now leaving behind you—faithful to your convictions, and filled with the generous enthusiasm which is the parent of every exalted aim and virtuous endeavour—through the changes of time, and the revolutions of opinion, and the new interests that are ever infus-

ing themselves into human affairs, keeping your eye steadily fixed on great principles and putting your trust in the unchangeable purposes of the Eternal God.

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